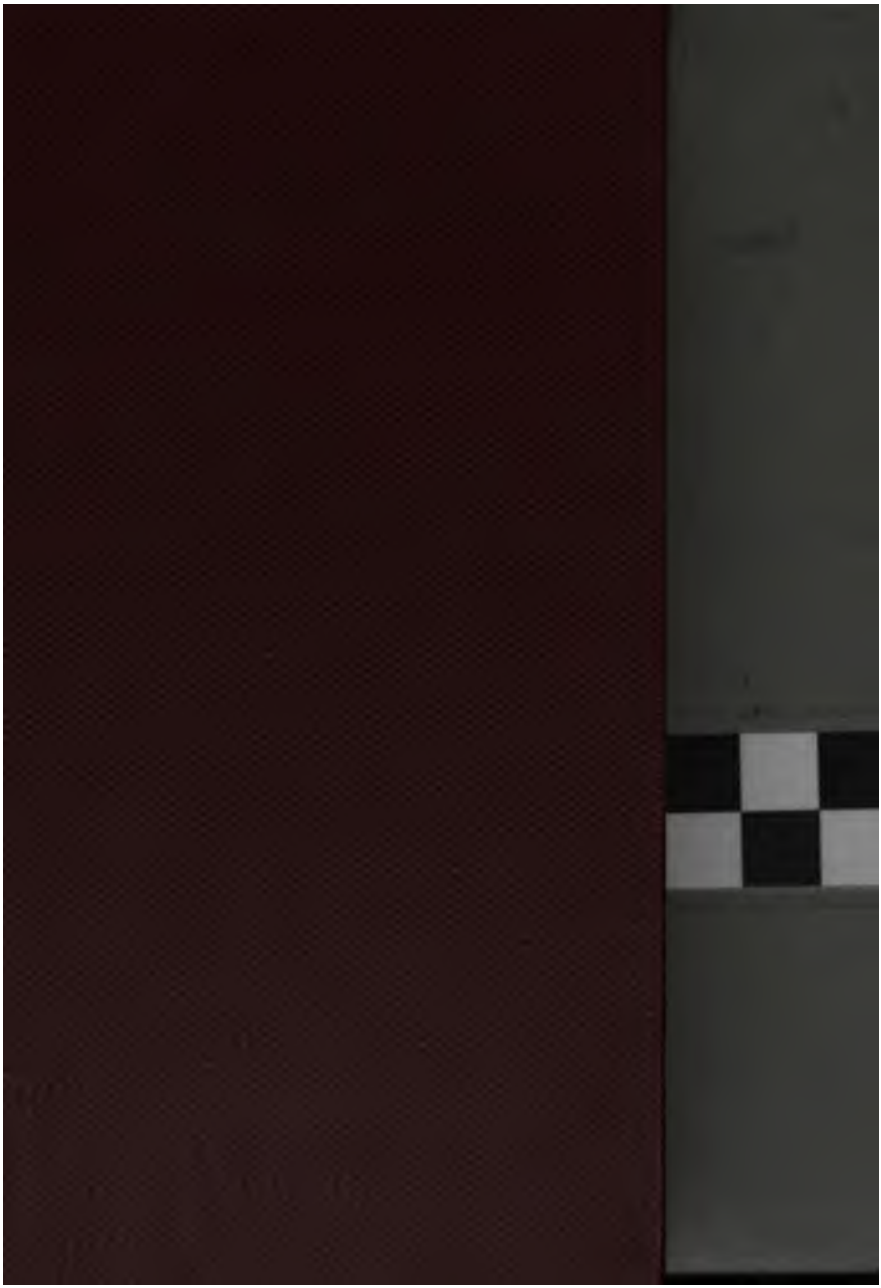

WORDSWORTH.


Wm Wordsworth

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A BIOGRAPHIC ÆSTHETIC STUDY.

BY

GEORGE H. CALVERT.

Mary M. Barclay
1880

BOSTON:
LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.—
NEW YORK:
CHARLES T. DILLINGHAM.
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The political articles in *The National Review* mostly appear to have been written in a depressed state of mind. Mr. Traill, for instance, in the course of an inquiry as to whether the recent national self-congratulations are well founded, takes a gloomy view of the English representative system. Amongst the literary articles, Mr. Hogben's on "The Mystical Side of Wordsworth" is one of the best. His conclusion is as follows: "Wordsworth's mystical leanings are natural outgoings of his individuality, not mere tentative movements of artificial life, and they are, emphatically, all in the direction of loftier intuition and more earnest life. Ruskin has somewhere called Wordsworth 'the poet of *Rightness*,' and we assuredly wrong him and ourselves if we relegate his mysticism to the realm of mere conjecture and wavering indolence of reason. Let us not readily put aside his own belief in the *use* of what is so finely felt that words can scarcely claim kinship therewith at all, and which memory holds rather through the knowledge that *now* is not as *then*, than because of its distinct ability to transcribe the past:—

> Deem not profitless those fleeting moods
> Of shadowy exultation; not for this,
> That they are kindred to our purer mind
> And intellectual life; but that the soul,
> Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
> Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
> Of possible sublimity.

It is, of course, even now, a certainty, but it grows clearer year by year, that Wordsworth's poetry—in spite of the mass of his common-place work, if you will—is of quite perennial value. And it is to speak of no remote cause of this to say that his poetry is of that order which, if it does not anticipate science, nevertheless finds new and closer relationships to each coming truth, as though it had waited therefor. If we will admit it, indeed, this very charm of easy adjustment, and this strange deep perspective in outlook, —where is no *cul de sac*, but the rich endless unfolding of nature and being—are themselves testimonies to the largeness of a life whose voice—*despite all our hewers of wood and drawers of water—must ever be*

To the heart the poet speaks out of a hear that is fuller than most men's with the loves o the heart; and being blessed with a musica throat he is listened to as the privilege mouth-piece of his fellows. Through an ear o finer sensitiveness he hears cadences of divine movement, and thus becomes a voice for the sincerest, deepest truth of feeling. To the heart-throb of the poet we hearken, because i is an echo, a rhythmic echo, to that within ou own breast. With delicate, palpitating cords wrought out of the finest tissue of the brain he twines himself around our being; and we with the joy and freedom of the most disinterested gratitude, help him to tighten these cords. Not a Scotsman in any part of the globe but feels that Burns is a dear brother to whom he owes a debt that he would on no account be rid of. All whose speech is English are better, manlier men because three hundred years ago William Shakespeare lived and wrote, and acted on the stage. On entering the most hallowed precinct in Europe, the little church by the Avon at Stratford, we are sanctified by reverential awe; about us is an atmosphere spiritualized by a transcendent presence. When looking at the cathedral of Florence, who thinks of the priests who dedicated it?

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"The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew
Upon thy grave, good creature! While my heart
Can beat never will I forget thy name.
Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest
After thy innocent and busy stir
In narrow cares, thy little daily growth
Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years,
And more than eighty, of untroubled life,
Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood
Honored with little less than filial love."

More fortunate was Wordsworth than most poet-boys in finding sympathy and encouragement among his teachers, especially in the Rev. William Taylor, head-master during four years of Wordsworth's stay at Hawkshead. By the poet Mr. Taylor was ever kept in affectionate remembrance. He thus speaks of him, when after the lapse of eight years he visited his tomb:—

"The sound of voice and countenance of the man
Came back upon me, so that some few tears
Fell from me in my own despite.
He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,
Would have loved me, as one not destitute
Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
That he had formed, when I, at his command,
Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs."

Wordsworth was about fifteen, when, under Mr. Taylor, he wrote his first verses. Of them he thus speaks: "These verses were much admired, far more than they deserved, for they

were but a tame imitation of Pope's versification, and a little in his style. This exercise, however, put it into my head to compose verses from the impulse of my own mind, and I wrote, while yet a school-boy, a long poem running upon my adventures and the scenery of the country in which I was brought up."

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, to imitate Pope was, for a beginner, inevitable, almost a necessity. Pope was in the air; he had possession of the literary ear of England. From the want of rhythmic sweep in his versification, from the monotonous cadence of single lines and couplets (in that day mistaken for poetic melody), and from the pith of his thought being furnished by the understanding, Pope is easily imitated. In his lines there is often a metallic ring, which is very significant of the subordination of feeling to the understanding. No stronger proof can be given of the then influence of Pope than that Wordsworth, at the outset of his poetic career, should have taken him for a model, — Wordsworth, who in his maturity was so unlike Pope, both in the substance and the form of his poetry.

The impulses and inner wants of his being at this period Wordsworth thus describes: —

"Nothing at that time
So welcome, no temptation half so dear,
As that which urged me to a daring feat:
Deep pools, tall trees, black chasms, and dizzy crags,
And tottering towers, — I loved to stand and read
Their looks."

His morning walks were early, and he often made the five-mile circuit of the lake of Esthwaite before school-hours with a companion, John Fleming, of Rayrigg, —

"Repeating favorite verses with one voice,
Or conning more, as happy as the birds
That with us chanted."

The fields and hills and glens and streams, — these were his playground. Fishing and hunting were his games. On holidays he and his school-fellows sought the neighboring broader waters of Lake Windermere, —

"To sweep along the plain of Windermere
With rival oars."

In the winter, when their own lake of Esthwaite was tightly frozen, came the rapture of skating: —

"All shod in steel,
They hissed along the polished ice, in games
Confederate."

To Wordsworth school-days were a time of more freedom than to most boys. In that se-

cluded mountainous corner of England, habits and ways were more natural, less constrained, than in populous counties, where stouter guards are needed against the obtrusion of disturbing influences. Rule, control, indispensable always, is nowhere more needful than for human beings during the rapid, sapful, physical, and mental growth of boyhood. God's law, unceasingly active, being everywhere, the problem, in all kinds of control, is to make man's law square with God's law, our finite methods smoothly fit into the infinite method. When they do thus fit, then human law is just and clean, and its incumbency is not felt as pressure, but as guardianship. Wordsworth, with all his occasional headiness and seeming lawlessness in boyhood, was organized for easy submission to law. Rectitude was a leading quality of his mind; and thus he would early feel the need of conformity to honest rule. Law, a first condition of freedom, to which the strongest must submit, itself owes allegiance to justice. Uninspired by this allegiance, it loses its virtue of law, and turns into despotic usurpation. On the other hand, usurpation is encouraged by licentious use of freedom, which thus by abuse forfeits its privileges. Toward

such abuse Wordsworth, at school, was not affected, and in his later maturity became staunchly conservative,—so conservative as almost to mistake fallible, transitory, human institutions for divine, eternal order.

II.

CAMBRIDGE.

STEEPING himself daily and nightly, winter and summer, through storm and sunshine, in the clean, creative atmosphere of nature, with her shifting, ever-freshened shows and sounds, her inexhaustible beauties, Wordsworth spent happily the springy years of boyhood, learning in the school-room more than most of his fellows, and in the air more than the best of them, —

> "Holding unconscious intercourse with beauty."

Hear him, in after years, apostrophize the mountains, lakes, and sounding cataracts, the mists and winds that dwell among the hills where he was born! —

> "If in my youth I have been pure in heart;
> If, mingling with the world, I am content
> With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
> With God and Nature communing, removed
> From little enmities and low desires,
> The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,
> This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown;
> If, 'mid indifference and apathy,

And wicked exultation, when good men
On every side fall off, we know not how,
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
Of peace and quiet and domestic love,
Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers
On visionary minds; if, in this time
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
Despair not of our nature, but retain
A more than Roman confidence, a faith
That fails not; in all sorrow my support,
The blessing of my life, the gift is yours,
Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 't is yours,
Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations; and in thee,
For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
A never-failing principle of joy
And purest passion."

When he entered Saint John's College, Cambridge, Wordsworth was in his eighteenth year. From Cumberland to Cambridge was a wide leap; it was a leap from boyhood to manhood. With an anticipatory grasp of the near future, college youths proudly assume the title of men. Of his first days at Cambridge Wordsworth gives this vivid picture:—

"My spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope;
Some friends I had, acquaintances who there
Seemed friends, poor, simple school-boys, now hung round
With honor and importance; in a world
Of welcome faces up and down I roved;
Questions, directions, warnings, and advice
Flowed in upon me from all sides; fresh day
Of pride and pleasure! to myself I seemed

A man of business and expense, and went
From shop to shop about my own affairs,
To Tutor or to Tailor, as befell,
From street to street with loose and careless mind.
I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed
Delighted through the motley spectacle;
Gowns grave or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,
Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers:
Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,
A northern villager.

As if the change
Had waited on some fairy wand, at once
Behold me rich in moneys, and attired
In splendid garb, with hose of silk, and hair
Powdered like rimy trees, when frost is keen.
My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by,
With other signs of manhood that supplied
The lack of beard. The weeks went roundly on,
With invitations, suppers, wine, and fruit,
Smooth housekeeping within, and all without
Liberal, and suiting gentleman's array."

Wordsworth was not a zealous learner of college lessons; he was not an ambitious student. The poetic mind is aspiring, and aspiration somewhat suppresses ambition, the higher overruling the lower. To bear the collegian glibly along the unwatered wastes of tutorial instruction, with its dry, unsympathetic methods, his movement needs the spur of ambition. Aspiration, to be sure, was still partially dormant in Wordsworth. Some verse he wrote while at Cambridge, but he did not yet know

or even feel himself to be a poet. And neither in the instruction nor the instructors was there aught to nurture or to reveal his gift, to draw him upward, to cultivate the innate faculty of admiration (the very core of the literary and poetic power). There was little to spiritualize the mind. No one at Cambridge thought of interpreting to him the full meaning and quality of the choice passages from Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, which his father had made him learn by rote. Such an interpreter to such a pupil would have been a unique conjunction, — a teacher who could thus early have revealed and recognized the future greatest English poet of an age illustrious by its poets, and who would then have administered to him appropriate nutriment! This could hardly be; great poets have to unfold themselves solitarily from within, gathering such food from without as their selective susceptibilities pick out for them. To the world they have to present themselves unannounced, and are greeted there at first with frowns and sneers.

Even had there happened to be among the tutors and professors of Cambridge one who could have appreciated Wordsworth, who could have divined him, (and what a blessing to be thus divined!) the formality of the relation be-

tween teacher and pupil, the absence of cordiality, — and nothing is so attractive and effective with the young as cordiality, — the unnatural scholastic chasm between preceptor and learner, — a chasm dug in large measure by the incapacity and self-indulgence of the preceptor, — all this, together with the unpliable, superficial methods of teaching, would have tended to keep him out of the range of such recognition. Besides, Wordsworth, from the early death of both his parents, and the primitive, unconstrained habits of secluded Cumberland, had been accustomed to more freedom than most school-boys, and was by nature impatient of control: —

> "While yet an innocent I breathed
> Among wild appetites and blind desires,
> Motions of savage instinct my delight
> And exultation." [1]

The poet's illimitable privilege it is to be drawn to the things of God: to be busied with the changeful wonders of earth and sky; with the yearnings of his own heart, the yearnings of other hearts; with mysterious imaginations; with the outreachings of aspiring thought, the

[1] This quotation is not from *The Prelude*, the poem from which all those already made were taken, but from the *The Recluse*, which is still in manuscript, but accessible to Christopher Wordsworth, the selected writer of the Memoir.

prophetic heavings of a soul more vital than other souls; with glimpses of great truths; with the outward and inward exhibitions of manifold life; with the sincerities of being. At Cambridge, what was nearest about Wordsworth was man-made; little smack of nature and cordiality anywhere. Instruction was formal much more than vital; and especially lifeless were the daily religious services. Slack, too, in attendance on them were the professors and tutors and fellows, — they who were bound by sacred engagements to observe the laws of the University, and who should have done so, both for their own sakes and as leaders of the students. With the hollowness and hypocrisy of his superiors Wordsworth was shocked. His nephew and biographer, the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth, says: "The youthful undergraduate looked down upon some of his instructors." Things must be grossly wrong when the pupil is forced into that attitude towards his teacher. For the young are prone to respect their elders, and in nineteen cases out of twenty it is the fault of the elders if they fail in respect and deference. But, for their self-protection, nature provides the young with a keen insight into pretense and make-believe. And they have a quick

sense of injustice, and a quicker for tokens of love; and unless religion be flanked by these, by love and justice, its inculcations strike not in, and will even prepare the mind for after doubt of, and renouncement of, the authority of divine law.

At Cambridge Wordsworth found among his preceptors no genial adviser, none to let fall upon him that celestial manna to the thirsting poetic nature, sympathy. For their unfolding all men need sympathy,—a great deal of sympathy; and to the poet in an especial way, so full of sympathy himself, it is in his opening manhood a rich encouragement and a support. A thousand years ago there was less than now; still, in proportion to the deep resources of the human soul, the want of active fellow-feeling to-day is a prominent cause of the all-pervading crudities and discords of human condition. Sympathy is the chief of Christian virtues. This was the heavenly distinction of Jesus; this makes him the supreme teacher.

At Cambridge Wordsworth had a glorious company of poetic predecessors: Chaucer, Spenser, Ben Jonson, Milton, Cowley, Dryden, and as immediate successor Coleridge. To what extent would they have subscribed the following lines with which he concludes a description of Cambridge:—

"Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmities, and guile
Murmuring submission, and bald government
(The idol weak as the idolater),
And Decency and Custom starving Truth,
And blind Authority beating with his staff
The child that might have led him; Emptiness
Followed as of good omen, and meek Worth
Left to herself, unheard of and unknown."

In his first summer vacation he went directly back to the vale of Esthwaite, to lodge again with his "old dame," to sleep in the same bed he slept in for so many school-boy years. This was a home to him, — his only home. He retrod his old haunts, shook hands with old friends and old playmates, and in the animal glow of youth and social impulse, joined for a time in a

"Heartless chase of trivial pleasures,"

becoming one of a light crowd that spent days and nights in

"Feast and dance and public revelry,
And sports and games (too grateful in themselves,
Yet in themselves less grateful, I believe,
Than as they were a badge glossy and fresh
Of manliness and freedom), all conspired
To lure my mind from firm, habitual quest
Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal
And damp those yearnings which had once been mine,
A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up
To his own eager thoughts."

But for Wordsworth, with his earnest nature, his high, urgent faculties, there could not be many days

> "Spent in a round of strenuous idleness;"

and one morning, after having passed

> "The night in dancing, gayety, and mirth,
> With din of instruments and shuffling feet,
> And glancing forms, and tapers glittering,
> And unaimed prattle flying up and down;
> Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there
> Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed,
> Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,
> And tingled through the veins,"—

as he walked homeward in the dawn of a summer day, the beauties and grandeurs and glories of the mountainous landscape, "drenched in empyreal light," so wrought upon him that, suddenly overcome by one of those

> "Trances of thought and mountings of the mind"

to which poetic natures of deep inwardness are liable, he bursts forth:—

> "Ah! need I say, dear Friend, that to the brim
> My heart was full? I made no vows, but vows
> Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
> In thankful blessedness, which yet survives."

III.

AN EVENING WALK.

THE earliest verse of Wordsworth retained by him in his complete works is the "Conclusion of a Poem composed in Anticipation of leaving School." Only fourteen lines, of octosyllabic rhyme, are given, dated 1786, when he was in his seventeenth year. The next in date is a poem of nearly four hundred lines, called "An Evening Walk, addressed to a Young Lady" (his sister). This is in rhymed couplets of ten syllables, dated 1787, 1788, and 1789, and therefore was written, for the most part, during his college years. But in it there is no mention of, or even allusion to, Cambridge, the whole being descriptive of his native Cumberland region. The form and manner tell that the writer had been with Pope, and that he had also tarried in delight on the new bridge, built chiefly by Thomson and Cowper, and by Burns, which led from the restricted, monotonous level of the artificial school to the boundless outlook over the stream-enlivened valleys and wooded

hills of the natural school. The substance, the feeling and inner thought reveal that the writer had been still more with nature than with books, and that he had thus early linked himself to her in close, tender friendship, and that already in his young heart was kindled the sympathy for human suffering which was in after years to beam upon his descriptions of natural scenery the light of a halo. This youthful poem is a subdued overture to the long performance of his life. The congenial intimacy with nature was calling out his characteristic powers, laying bare his preferences, and through its congeniality moving the profundities of his large being.

With what fidelity and liveliness he already seizes the commonest presentations of nature, this picture of the universal familiar and favorite of man gives evidence (the happy opening epithets, he tells us in a note, are borrowed from Tasso's *dolcemente feroce*) : —

"Sweetly ferocious, round his native walks,
Pride of his sister-wives, the monarch stalks;
Spur-clad his nervous feet, and firm his tread;
A crest of purple tops the warrior's head.
Bright sparks his black and rolling eyeball hurls
Afar; his tail he closes and unfurls;
On tiptoe reared, he strains his clarion throat,
Threatened by faintly answering farms remote.

Again with his shrill voice the mountain rings,
While, flapped with conscious pride, resound his wings."

But on Wordsworth's page is never far distant the paramount theme of poetry, the choice creature of creation, the culmination of natural life and beauty, without whom nature would miss her ordained admiration; the beaming mirror in whose polish her glories are grouped and glorified; the immortal mortal, between whose virtuous elevations and sinister depths are countless ranges of being, whose manifold life shifts from terror to joy, from the sublime to the little, from innocence to guilt, from earthly despair to infinite hope; "a budded angel graft on clay," whose triumphs and dejections are for the poet his best opportunities. And so Wordsworth, after giving many lines to the swan, and describing how she teaches her young to swim, taking them one by one alternately upon her back when they are tired, opens thus a new paragraph:—

"Fair Swan! by all a mother's joys caressed,
Haply some wretch has eyed, and called thee blessed,
When with her infants, from some shady seat
By the lake's edge, she rose, to face the noontide heat;
Or taught their limbs along the dusty road
A few short steps to totter with their load."

Fellow-feeling with the very poor and the humble, an unflinching hand in reproducing

their almost hopeless misery, an unad
setting of such pictures in the clean, n
frame of natural scenery, — the faithfulness
the frame to reality bringing forward the sever
truthfulness of the picture, — these character-
istics of Wordsworth's work in after years are
stamped upon this youthful venture, giving it
fine quality, notwithstanding its artistic crude-
ness. Wordsworth was somewhat slow in get-
ting command of his inward resources, and of
the instrument for giving them utterance, —
varied versification. He was not quick in ma-
turing, like Keats and Shelley. His mind was
more deliberative than theirs, more meditative,
and he lacked fluency of speech, that verbal
readiness whereby words come nimbly and in-
stantaneously to the call of the other faculties,
— a readiness which in a sound, deep mind is
a virtue and an aid, but in the shallow, though
an aid to themselves, is, to the reader or hearer,
a vice, being the capacious conduit for the
overflow of commonplace.

Wordsworth's mental structure built itself up more gradually than is mostly the case with poetic minds. Was this because of the preponderance of the meditative over the passionate, of subjective evolution over the lively objectivity of sensuous perception, and of sensa-

tions caused by ringing percussions from without? For Wordsworth's delight in nature was more spiritual than pictorial or material. His poetic powers were hardly ripened until he reached or approached his thirtieth year. Yet his delight in the poetical showed itself almost in childhood; for he says:—

> "Twice five years
> Or less I might have seen, when first my mind
> With conscious pleasure opened to the charm
> Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet
> For their own *sakes*, a passion, and a power;
> And phrases pleased me chosen for delight,
> Or pomp, or love."

Although Wordsworth did not in his first published poem, written for the most part at college, make even an allusion to Cambridge or its environs, in the long autobiographical poem, written between his thirtieth and thirty-fifth year, called "The Prelude; or, Growth of a Poet's Mind," he gives to Cambridge many pages. His stay at Cambridge would have been a lasting benefaction to himself and his readers, had he got there nothing but that inspiration from the statue of Newton, embodied in two lines,—lines so vivid with genius that of themselves they give an instantaneous insight into the essential quality of poetry, flashing into the mind by a single mighty stroke

the expansive, elevating virtue there is in creative imagination, which, by virtue of divi illumination, pierces into the inmost nature things. From his room in St. John's College Wordsworth could see — on a clear night even from his pillow — the antechapel wherein was the statue, —

> "The marble index of a mind forever
> Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone."

What a far swing is given to the reader's delighted brain! What a picture of a great original discoverer, "voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone"!

The poetical, in its grandest play, unifies, reveals the unity there is in all being, and one of its means of doing this is by holding up new analogies, and by bringing remote and near things into sudden, harmonious contact. Of this revealing power here is another fine illustration, from the opening pages of "The Prelude." To give the reader an idea of what Wallace had done for Scotland, and how he is there valued, Wordsworth says he

> "Left the name
> Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower,
> All over his dear country."

The thought that Wallace lives in the heart of all his countrymen, of every Scot, rich and

poor, high and low, man, woman, child,— how could it be conveyed so fully, so instantaneously, as by this figure of the wild flower? On hill and plain, in valley and dell, near rock and river, on every acre of Scottish ground, fertile or barren, where man has made a dwelling, wild flowers are found. By this simple comparison Wallace is felt to be everywhere. At first the simplicity veils from us the efficiency, the beauty, the power of the figure.

Through his long life Wordsworth walked almost daily about the beautiful mountain-and-lake region where he lived. The maid-servant at Rydal Mount, showing the rooms to a stranger, said of the one which he took for the poet's study, "This is the library; master's study is out of doors." He made several visits to Scotland to walk through some of her most attractive scenery. By means of this intimate intercourse with nature he absorbed much of her spirit as well as her features and forms. In such walks it is the visionary, the poetic eye, that sees the best that is to be seen, and out of this best the meditative activity seizes new likenesses and works into the woof of its task fresh analogies and subtleties. From this inward meditative superiority, thus nourished, it is that comes what Wordsworth calls

"The great nature that exists in works
Of mighty poets."

His mood and condition in these studious walks he describes in the following lines. At one period he was always accompanied by a knowing terrier:—

"A hundred times when, roving high and low,
I have been harassed with the toil of verse,
Much pains and little progress, and at once
Some lovely image in the song rose up
Full-formed, like Venus rising from the sea;
Then have I darted forwards to let loose
My hand upon his back with stormy joy,
Caressing him again and yet again.
And when at evening on the public way
I sauntered, like a river murmuring
And talking to itself when all things else
Are still, the creature trotted on before;
Such was his custom; but whene'er he met
A passenger approaching, he would turn
To give me timely notice, and straightway,
Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed
My voice, composed my gait, and, with the air
And mien of one whose thoughts are free, advanced
To give and take a greeting that might save
My name from piteous rumors, such as wait
On men suspected to be crazed in brain."

IV.

BEAUPUIS.

Of his growing consciousness of poetic power, during the latter part of his stay at Cambridge, Wordsworth gives intimation in the following significant passage of "The Prelude:" —

> "Those were the days
> Which also first emboldened me to trust
> With firmness, hitherto but lightly touched
> By such a daring thought, that I might leave
> Some monument behind me which pure hearts
> Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness,
> Maintained even by the very name and thought
> Of printed books and authorship, began
> To melt away; and further, the dread awe
> Of mighty names was softened down and seemed
> Approachable, admitting fellowship
> Of modest sympathy."

Accompanied by a friend and fellow-student, Robert Jones, of Wales, Wordsworth spent his last summer vacation in a pedestrian tour through France, Savoy, Switzerland, and the north of Italy. They landed in Calais on the 13th of July, 1790, the eve of a national

jubilee, the day when the King of France took the oath of fidelity to the new constitution, a day which thrilled Europe with joy: —

> "France standing on the top of golden hours,
> And human nature seeming born again."

— Southward from Calais they held their way, and saw how bright a face is worn when "joy of one is joy for tens of thousands." They passed through hamlets and towns gaudy with the faded garlands and remains of the great festival. To shorten the journey they walked for three days through sequestered villages: —

> "And found benevolence and blessedness
> Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring
> Hath left no corner of the land untouched."

And thus by the vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy they reached the "gentle Saône." Then the rapid Rhone bore them as with wings on its current between lofty rocks, — a lonely pair of strangers floating down the stream, clustered together with a merry crowd of travelers returning from the grand national festival at Paris. With this jocund company they landed at night, and after a joyous supper, enlivened by fragrant Burgundy, they all rose and danced hand in hand round the board, the two young Englishmen sharing heartily the triumph and the hope of the hour.

Again the two took to their staffs and knapsacks, and, "kept in a perpetual hurry of delight by the almost uninterrupted succession of sublime and beautiful objects that passed before their eyes," as Wordsworth wrote to his sister, they wandered through parts of Savoy and Switzerland and the lake region of Italy, first crossing the Alps over the Simplon, wondering, as they descended into the southern gorge, at

> "The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> And in the narrow rent at every turn
> Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
> As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light, —
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end."

Arrived at Basle, the pedestrians bought a boat, and floated down the Rhine to Cologne, returning to England by Calais.

This tour furnished material for another

poem, "Descriptive Sketches," which, with the "Evening Walk," was published in quarto, in 1793, by J. Johnson, — the same Johnson who was Cowper's publisher. The two poems attracted little public attention. But they fell into the hands of a student who had entered Cambridge the year that Wordsworth left it. This was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who, in his "Biographia Literaria," says, "During the last year of my residence at Cambridge I became acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's 'Descriptive Sketches,' and seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced."

In January, 1791, Wordsworth took his degree of B. A. and quitted Cambridge.

At this time he described himself: —

> "By personal ambition unenslaved,
> Frugal as there was need, and, though self-willed,
> From dangerous passions free."

In these three lines is worded, with intense condensation, the moral side of Wordsworth's being. The bearing upon his life of what these three statements involve can hardly be overstated. Had Wordsworth been enslaved by personal ambition, we should not be now seeking to penetrate into the mysteries of his mind: the great poet, Wordsworth, would not

have been. The poetical bears the mind away from transitory things, from the worldly eminences coveted by ambition, — bears it away from surfaces to the imperishable spiritual truths which vitalize the intuitions of man and dignify his nature. Wordsworth had a large, keen understanding, so that, had the determination of his career been left to ambition, he might have become a competitor of the Pitts and Foxes of the period, his poetic faculty giving breadth and brilliancy to parliamentary speeches. Being unambitious, he was not drawn by outward aims from yielding to the desires of his emotional being; he was not tempted to devote his rare gifts to the gratification of worldly passions: he deliberately and resolutely dedicated himself to the high and exacting vocation of poet.

In that vocation success was attainable by Wordsworth only through stringent economy, and consequent frugality. He was now living, assisted by his uncles, on the remnant of his share of patrimonial capital. Temperance in food and drink, so serviceable to all workers, is essential to the mental worker. Any excess beyond the needs of nutrition is a weight upon the vital spring, lessening its elasticity; and especially is this obstructive pressure felt

by those refined, sensitive instrumentalities through whose movement the soul achieves its most delicate intellectual and spiritual successes.

The third statement, "and, though self-willed, from dangerous passions free," is as big with meaning and importance as the first. Wordsworth was a man of large self-esteem. Nature provides most of us with a full proportion of this indispensable quality, the manifestation of which people are quick to observe and to complain of in others, each one's own protective self-estimation making him as watchful and sensitive to approaches from without as the night sentinel of a besieged city. In Wordsworth, coming when he did, his ample share of this mental activity was almost a virtue. As an innovator and renovator in the domain of poetry, and appearing at a time when criticism had not yet her eyes half open, there was needed, in an original new poet, a clear self-consciousness and persistent self-reliance to maintain the bold position he had assumed, and not be forced from it by the continuous pressure of general opinion, or shaken in his purpose by the confident reiteration of clever, partial, unorganic criticism.

This calm self-confidence protected him most

bravely, too in his opening manhood. Here it proved itself a meritorious agency in enabling him to withstand the requirements of guardians and friends, who, in urging him to enter one of the higher professional careers, were simply doing what with their lights was their duty. But the path of a poet, with his interior scintillations, such outside lights are apt to confuse rather than illuminate. And so Wordsworth, on quitting Cambridge, instead of apprenticing himself to a lawyer or doctor, or preparing to take orders, or putting on an ensign's uniform, idled away (as they deemed it) four months in seeing London; and how thoroughly he saw and enjoyed the "crowded solitude" of the huge metropolis a whole book of "The Prelude" bears witness. In this London experience he was befriended by the second clause of the third statement, being "from dangerous passions free."

He quitted London towards the end of May. After spending the summer with his friend Jones, walking with him through the northern part of Wales, he returned for a while to Cambridge, and in November set out alone for Orleans, "on the stately Loire," lured back to France by the appeals which to every generous soul were made by the resounding shouts and

shrieks of the French people in their agonizing struggle for emancipation. On the way he tarried a few days in Paris, ran from spot to spot, "of old or recent fame," and in both the clamorous halls of the National Assembly and the Jacobins —

> "I saw the Revolutionary Power
> Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms."

At that period, Wordsworth hoped and expected that a new era of liberty and happiness was about to dawn upon the world. The French Revolution was such a dawn; but in the slow unfolding of a national history, for the dawn to mount into noon-day blaze not merely decades are needed, but centuries. People who are at first too hopeful, or want deep faith, or are naturally short-sighted or easily discouraged, cry out in despair, because at the end of a few years the human passions, let loose by the advent of a national dawn, have so overclouded it that it seems utterly effaced; and thus many, who basked rejoicing in its fresh beams, now look upon it as a deceptive will-o'-the-wisp, and not as a genuine lustrous promise, deriving its light and its power from the glowing eternal sun of truth.

But passions are the promoters, the very constituents, of man's progressive attainment;

they are the ladders by which he mounts to higher planes of exertion. The deep, restless ocean, which swathes all our continents in its purifying immensities, which, as the path of universal intercommunication among races, is the chief outward civilizer of humanity,—would you look despondently and angrily at the sublime ocean because of the destruction by its temporary storms? When some one, in the presence of Canova, à propos of a recent assassination, disparaged the Italians on account of their passionateness, the eminent sculptor affirmed that it was to the fire of their passions that the Italians owed their great achievements in life and history.

And this deep, fiery, restless element, this electric source of all human movement, must not be too much compressed. If it be, there will come a terrific bursting of boilers. In France the royal and sacertodal engineers, who for centuries had control of the official locomotive, had become so stupefied by selfishness, through long exercise of irresponsible power, so paralyzed by self-indulgence, that they had no feeling for the needs, no perception of the forces, of the mass they undertook to guide. Hence the twofold tyranny growing more and more tyrannical, oppression more oppressive,

a great and patient people's heart at last so heaved under the galling infliction that it rent the rotted bonds that bound it. In the frenzy of liberation were committed passionate excesses, surface bubbles, thrown up from the black abysses of unspeakable wrong, accumulated by many cruel generations. When Wordsworth passed through Paris on his way to Orleans, out of the rayless slimy caves of ignorance and fear—which were the mental homes of the masses brutified by bad government—had not yet crept the hideous monsters, begotten on darkness by despotism, who a little later crawled forth to thaw their benumbed ferocity at the fires kindled by terror and revenge, and quickened by sprinklings of blood. Robespierre and his like were not yet conspicuous.

At Orleans Wordsworth became acquainted with a band of officers of rank, Frenchmen, so disgusted with the Revolution that they stood ready, at the first provocation or opportunity, to join, on the Rhine, the emigrants in arms against their country. One of these, Beaupuis, a man of high title, distinguished in person, manners, and mind, was a patriot, and therefore spurned, as the great Mirabeau was, by his titled associates. From the picture Words-

worth draws of Beaupuis in "The Prelude," he seems to have been one of those clear, cordial men, whose moral sensibilities guide them to the right road. Others of the French nobles of that momentous period, too expansive and generous to intrench themselves in the citadels of privilege, gave their hearts and lives to the cause of the oppressed millions. To Beaupuis Wordsworth pays this beautiful tribute:—

> "A meeker man
> Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
> Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
> Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
> Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
> As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf
> When foot hath crushed them.
>
> Man he loved
> As man; and to the mean and the obscure,
> And all the homely in their homely works,
> Transferred a courtesy which had no air
> Of condescension; but did rather seem
> A passion and a gallantry, like that
> Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
> Had paid to woman."

They became close friends, had long, intimate talks together, walking in the venerable forests near Orleans, or along the Loire, a mutual comfort and support. One day, meeting a poor girl, thin and pale from want of food, languidly leading a heifer to crop grass by the

roadside, Beaupuis exclaimed, with agitation, "'T is against that we are fighting." Soon called to lead an army against the Vendeans, —

"He perished fighting, in supreme command,
Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire."

In the autumn of 1792, Wordsworth went back to Paris. The king had been dethroned and imprisoned, the Republic declared; the Girondists were sinking, Robespierre was rising; the German army, on the borders of France, was hastening the reign of terror. A fortnight before he arrived, had occurred the massacres of September. The great city heaved like a volcano in travail. Wordsworth was awed. What his feelings were the first night in his high, lonely chamber, he records in the following grand passage: —

"With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres,
Divided from me by one little month,
Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up
From tragic fiction or true history,
Remembrances and dim admonishments.
The horse is taught his manage, and no star
Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
For the spent hurricane the air provides
As fierce a successor; the tide retreats
But to return out of its hiding-place
In the great deep; all things have second birth;

> The earthquake is not satisfied at once;
> And in this way I wrought upon myself,
> Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
> To the whole city, 'Sleep no more.'"

And yet, through his sympathy with the deep, regenerative movement, such was the fascination of the terrible city, that, had he not been called suddenly to England by pressing demands there, he would have remained in Paris, and have "seen it out," to perish probably with his Girondist friends.

V.

DOROTHY.

YOUNG WORDSWORTH was a republican; not from having witnessed in France the uprising of a whole people against the degrading, crushing burden of monarchic and oligarchic despotism, his mind kindled by the new flame that blazed upon the brow of a great nation as it rose upon that mighty leap from darkness into light. His sympathy with the French movement sprang, in large measure, from healthy, manly feelings, which had been fostered by the republican influences around his youth. Describing, in "The Prelude," his first talks with the band of royal officers at Orleans, and how he had no prepossessions in favor of monarchy, he writes this remarkable passage:

"Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
And ill could brook, beholding that the best
Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district, and which yet
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness
Than any other nook of English ground,
It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,
The face of one who, whether boy or man,
Was vested with attention or respect
Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
Of many benefits, in later years
Derived from academic institutes
And rules, that they held something up to view
Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
On equal ground; that we were brothers all
In honor, as in one community,
Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
Distinction open lay to all that came,
And wealth and titles were in less esteem
Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry."

Add to this the ideal tendency of the poetic mind, which seeks to beget proportion and higher harmonies, and one can understand why Wordsworth, on his return to England in the beginning of the year 1793, published a pamphlet, in form of a letter to the Bishop of Llandaf, in which he declared himself an enemy to monarchy and hereditary peerage; and why he wrote to his friend Mathews: "Hereditary distinctions and privileged orders of every species, I think, must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement."

Wordsworth was restless. Now in his twenty-fourth year, no step had yet been taken towards meeting and solving the problem that confronts every young man: what is to be his life-work? What is he going to do to earn his daily bread? A career must be decided on, and that quickly. On the other hand, a mysterious inward whisper held him back; not the seductive whisper of idleness, not the flattering whisper of ambition, but a serene intimation, at times impressively distinct, from the deeps of his soul, so cordial, so earnest, it was a spell upon him. In the depths of him was a motive force, derived from innate spiritual predominances, that was guiding him to the food appropriate to his nature, as the roving bee is led by a mysterious instinct when he wanders from flower to shrub, from meadow to mountain.

In this state he took to roving again. He first visited a friend in the Isle of Wight. Here his ears were vexed by sound of cannon at Portsmouth, prophetic of carnage. After the execution of Louis XVI., January 21, 1793, England would keep no terms with the regicide Republic. To Wordsworth this was a shock. In the summer he left the Isle of Wight, and wandered for two days over the

weary waste of Salisbury Plain. Thence he passed through Bristol to North Wales. In the beginning of 1794 he writes from Halifax to Mathews: "My sister is under the same roof with me; indeed, it was to see her that I came into this country. I have been doing nothing, and still continue to do nothing. What is to become of me I know not."

This reunion with his sister was a blessing to Wordsworth, — a long blessing. To such a poet such a sister was what, just at that time, he needed. In his mental make-up Wordsworth had not so much of the feminine element as it is good for a poet to have, such as many poets and high artists have, — an element which gives richness and tenderness where such qualities ought to be prominent. His sister Dorothy, two years younger than himself, in some measure supplied this deficiency by her influence, — an influence which grew and strengthened itself through a twofold sympathy, a fraternal and a poetic; and through her discernment of his latent powers and her eager desire to encourage them; but more than all through her disinterested devotion to her brother, her zealous self-dedication to the task of aiding him to unfold himself into the poet she felt confident he was: —

"She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth."

In the spring of 1794 they set out together from Halifax for Westmoreland. Dorothy writes: "I walked with my brother at my side from Kendal to Grasmere, eighteen miles, and afterwards from Grasmere to Keswick, fifteen more, through the most delightful country that was ever seen."

In May, from Whitehaven, where he was on a visit to his uncle Richard, Wordsworth writes to Mathews, in London, proposing to him that they should set on foot a monthly political and literary miscellany, to which, he says, "I would communicate critical remarks on poetry, the arts of painting, gardening, etc., besides essays on morals and politics."

This scheme for a magazine (which was to have been republican and called "The Philanthropist") came to naught. The debt due his father's estate by the Earl of Lonsdale had not been recovered. The prospect for Wordsworth was dreary. Relations and friends were disappointed, displeased. To them his rambles on the Continent and in England were a culpable waste of time. Writing from Keswick, in November, 1794, to Mathews, who was employed

in London on a newspaper, he says: "You say a newspaper would be glad of me. Do you think you could insure me employment in that way on terms similar to your own? I mean, also in an opposition paper, for I cannot abet, in the smallest degree, the measures pursued by the present ministry."

The autumn and winter he was engaged nursing a young friend, Raisley Calvert, who was in the last stage of consumption. Early in the year 1795 young Calvert died. On opening his will it was found that he had bequeathed to Wordsworth nine hundred pounds. Of this bequest Christopher Wordsworth, the biographer of his uncle, says: "Raisley Calvert, son of R. Calvert, Esq., steward to the Duke of Norfolk, was no poet himself, but he was endued with the wisdom of the heart, and with a certain discernment and prescience, which seem to be not unfrequently granted to unworldly men when about to leave the world; in bequeathing this legacy he had a strong belief that he was not only promoting the happiness of his friend, but consulting the interests of society."

This, which may be termed a profound act of friendship, saved Wordsworth. When we think of his state of mind, feeling, as he did painfully, the duty, the necessity, of doing something for

a livelihood; feeling, at the same time, that any work which would give him a livelihood would be hateful, because it would arrest, perhaps smother and suppress, his poetic aspirations and hopes, we can perceive what a rescue this thoughtful bequest was. His gratitude he uttered several years afterwards in the following cordial sonnet to his young benefactor: —

"Calvert! it must not be unheard by them
Who may respect my name, that I to thee
Owe many years of early liberty.
This care was thine, when sickness did condemn
Thy youth to hopeless wasting root and stem,
That I, if frugal and severe, might stray
Where'er I liked, and finally array
My temples with the Muses' diadem.
Hence, if in freedom I have loved the truth,
If there be aught of pure or good or great
In my past verse, or shall be in the lays
Of highest mood which now I meditate,
It gladdens me, O worthy short-lived youth,
To think how much of this will be thy praise."

Never was bequest more prolific in fruit. Never did a Shylock make gold breed more bountifully than did this short-lived youth when he bequeathed nine hundred pounds to his devoted companion, who would not desert him in his mortal sickness. To Mathews, who was negotiating in London to get him employment, Wordsworth wrote on the 7th of No-

vember, 1794, three months before the death of his young friend: "My friend has every symptom of a confirmed consumption, and I cannot think of quitting him in his present debilitated state!" And early in the following January he writes from Penrith: "I have been here for some time. I am still much engaged with my sick friend, and sorry am I to add that he worsens daily; he is barely alive."

It were not easy to imagine the exultation of young Wordsworth at this unlooked-for good fortune. Suddenly was dispelled the black cloud that for several years had hung over him, threatening his high literary hopes. He was free,—free to yield himself fully, unreservedly, to the deep, delightful solicitations of a creative soul, that longed to individualize its warm, vague yearnings and aspirations in concrete, definite forms of luminous verse; and he was free from the growing anxieties that had dogged his youthful life.

And this great joy was to be heightened. His sister was by his side; she who was so richly and exquisitely organized that she could be the encourager, the comforter, the tutelary genius of William Wordsworth; she who could help his heart to feel, and even his poetic eye to see, so tender was her sensibility, so fine her per-

ception of the beautiful, so clear and delicate her intellect and her tact.

That solitary ramble over the desolate plain of Salisbury had begotten on Wordsworth a tale of "Guilt and Sorrow," told in seventy-four Spenserian stanzas, a tale of almost too much sorrow; for within it is inclosed another story of utter deprivation and destitution, without a ray to streak the monotonous gloom, unless it be that in the inner tale guilt is not the cause of the lonely desolation. Into this poem is wrought Wordsworth's loving vision for nature, and his genuine fellow-feeling for the condition, the suffering, of the hopeless poor; the more effective because it exhibits a knowledge of their secret sentiment, — a knowledge so sure that it could only have been learnt, even by a poet, through sympathetic experience. The very earnestness of his feeling shuts off that imaginative play which might have woven into the stanzas some relieving colors. All is cheerless, like the wide expanse of Salisbury plain, which suggested the poem; but on the plain there must be at times a momentary radiance from rising or setting sun. The complicated Spenserian stanza, invented for the fanciful "Fairy Queen," is too highly wrought to be the medium of such a story, the narrative of which

runs at times near the level of prose. The poem is, nevertheless, an advance upon "Descriptive Sketches," and has upon it, not only the flush of poetic promise, but the ineffaceable stamp of high performance. The date affixed is 1793–4.

In the autumn of 1795 Wordsworth and his sister set up housekeeping near the sea-coast, in Dorsetshire. The country, Dorothy writes, "is delightful; we have charming walks, a good garden, a pleasant house." Here they walked and worked in the garden, and read and wrote. The place was secluded, with little society, and a post only once a week.

In the winter of 1795–6 Wordsworth, in conjunction with a literary friend (Wrangham), set himself to writing poetic imitations of Juvenal, to be published in a volume. But the volume was laid aside unfinished. Ten years later, when applied to to have his imitations of Juvenal published, he refused, and wrote: "I have long since come to a fixed resolution to steer clear of personal satire; in fact, I never will have anything to do with it, as far as concerns the *private* vices of individuals, on any account." The volume which he thus refused to let see the light was full of sharp satire upon the abuses of the time, upon the vices of those

high in place, and the corruptions of fashionable aristocratic society.

Wordsworth, free, rejoicing in his freedom, like fresh-fledged songsters of the woods, was still trying his wing, discovering by experiment to what kind of flight his pinion was best adapted. Juvenalian satire was not his forte. His next attempt was at a higher — the very highest — poetic flight, tragedy. To poets the drama is fascinating through its innate attractions of life-like impersonation; through its union of realism and idealism; through its interplay of active passions, and its concentration of human life at fullest tension; and through the supremacy which, by virtue of these qualities and requirements, it holds over all forms of poetic embodiment. Now Wordsworth's deficiencies, great poet as he is, were such as to place dramatic success out of his reach. He lacked the power of throwing himself out of himself into another individuality, — a power which, although not at all implying deep, large mental resources, is of primary need to the writer as well as to the actor of dramas. Wordsworth was eminently meditative, with the resources of sensibility and of intellect which make meditation productive; but for fusing the results of meditation with

nimble action he had not the indispensable animal vivacity. Chiefly from this cause, too, he was diffuse, and dramatic effectiveness depends much on compression. If Wordsworth's tragedy "The Borderers" had been the first work of his that Coleridge saw, I cannot think he would have said of it, as he said of "Descriptive Sketches," that it announced the coming of an "original poetic genius." The effect of these secondary qualifications on dramatic spirit and construction is so decisive, that the want of them seems to have slackened the flow of Wordsworth's deeper poetic currents, for "The Borderers" is, in poetry and in pictures, inferior to its predecessor, the narrative poem, "Guilt and Sorrow." The form of poetic embodiment must be adapted not only to the subject treated, but to the combination of gifts in the poet.

VI.

COLERIDGE.

In August, 1797, Wordsworth and his sister moved from Racedown, near the sea, in Dorsetshire, to Alfoxden, near the sea, in Somersetshire. This change was made that they might be in the neighborhood of Coleridge. In the early summer Coleridge (then in his twenty-sixth year, and two years younger than Wordsworth) had paid them a visit, and they, in return, spent a fortnight with him at Nether Stowey, where Coleridge, recently married, had taken a house. To the two poets a rare good fortune it was, and a high happiness, to meet and dwell near each other, — so seldom does a young poet find congenial companionship. And here it was more than congenial companionship; each was so high in power and aspiration that each could aid and elevate the other, the difference in their gifts being, in their intercourse, a lively stimulus to their splendid faculties. To enjoy more steadily the society of Coleridge, Wordsworth and his sis-

ter changed their abode. But even to be within walking distance of Coleridge, they might not have made the change had they found him in a region devoid of hills and streams. But at Alfoxden they even bettered their position as regards nature, being surrounded by wooded heights and glens and water-falls, with a park peopled by seventy head of deer; two miles from Bristol Channel, and three from Nether Stowey. Here is a portrait of Dorothy at this time, by Coleridge: "Wordsworth and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed, — in mind I mean, and in heart; for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her ordinary; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty; but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her innocent soul outbeams so brightly that who saw her would say 'Guilt was a thing impossible with her.' Her information various; her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature; and her taste a perfect electrometer."

The three made foot-excursions in company. To defray the expenses of one longer than usual, Wordsworth and Coleridge agreed to write together and send to the "New Monthly

Magazine" a poem, for which they expected to get five pounds. This was the origin of the "Lyrical Ballads." They began upon a subject offered by Coleridge. Wordsworth says: "As we endeavored to proceed conjointly, our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could have only been a clog."

A partnership in poetry may be practicable and profitable to poets of the second or third rank, — to poets in whom the art is primary and the inspiration secondary; but to poets of the first order, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, with whom art is but the form to inspiration, the futility of an attempt to work together on one and the same poem cannot fail to show itself at the start. A poet belonging to the first class is a new interpreter and reporter of man and nature, and as such he is necessarily unique, his individual originality, his self-substantiality, being that which lifts him to this elevation. At that height he could not be new without being different from any other poet, past, present, or future. The points of similarity among great poets come from their common humanity; but as creators, as discoverers

of new beauty and new truth, they must be solitary. When, through splendor of soul, they gain new glimpses into the divine depths, fresh glances into the beautiful mysteries of life, they are as much alone as was Galileo in his joy when that first look into his telescope laid bare to him new wonders in the heavens. In his inspired moments the poet's vision is telescopic, and inspiration is severely individual. Of his inspiration, the flow is fed from such large fountains of spiritual power, that, down to the finer streams, the very capillaries, of execution, all beats with the full pulse of ever-freshened life. Hence those inextinguishable sparkles of genius, where poetry glows and glories in its sunny summits, — sparkles which imply such concentration of genial soul that in their warmest brilliancy they are rare even in the greatest. If, in a poet of second or third order, you meet with one of these sparkles, you may be pretty sure that it is borrowed. He had the judgment to value and the art to appropriate it. Read in Pickering's edition of Gray the notes on the famous "Elegy," where you will find, in every stanza, laid bare close resemblances between lines and phrases of Gray and passages in a host of poets of the past, from Dante to Pope. And in poets of the calibre of

Gray, or even of higher name, who have much talent and art and comparatively little inspiration, can be detected, in their brightest passages, similar appropriations.

Wordsworth and Coleridge, being both of them poets of vast original resources, did not need this pumping into their veins from foreign streams to strengthen their poetic vitality; their own arteries supplied their embodiments with abundant vivacious blood. And thus, one experiment was enough to prove how fruitless it were to combine their rhythmic movements for the production of one work. The poem they made the attempt upon was the "Ancient Mariner," founded on a dream of a friend of Coleridge. Several suggestions were offered by Wordsworth, who, referring in "The Prelude" to the time when they roved

> "Unchecked upon smooth Qautock's airy ridge,"

thus addresses his companion:—

> "Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
> Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
> The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
> Didst utter of the lady Christabel."

On April 12, 1798, Wordsworth writes from Alfoxden to his friend Cottle, the bookseller of Bristol: "You will be pleased to hear that I have gone on very rapidly adding to my stock

of poetry. Do come and let me read it to you under the old trees in the park. We have little more than two months to stay in this place."

That freedom he had longed for, and so suddenly obtained, Wordsworth had not forfeited. Its basis he strengthened by extreme frugality. All indulgences were made subsidiary to the one indulgence, — delight in producing poetry. This was his master passion, which all other passions must serve. His breakfasts and his dinners, his walks and his talks, his reading and his meditation, all were directly or indirectly tributary to that which he had set before him as the purpose and aim, the happiness, of his life. And what a happiness! What a life! This inward lambent light of poetry, throwing its beams outward to lure forth the beautiful from its hiding-places, seeking the best and aiming to glorify it, — this interior sunshine is a perpetual exhilaration to its possessor, awakening joy which empowers him to triumph over sorrows, and even to turn their sting into a taper. The beautiful, being the best there is in all creation, in all the inward as in all the outward, in conduct as in aspect, is more alive with the infinite creative soul. And thus the beautiful calms while it moves us,

always exalts, and therefore to saddest conjunctions it brings a sanative refreshment, it becomes a consolation. In the beautiful there is always hope; for the beautiful is fullest of the divine spirit, and the divine spirit is, to the healthy human mind, overflowing with encouragement, with promise. The poet living in and by the beautiful, to him all outward creation is illuminated with a Saturnian light, and the inward spiritualized by faith and hope. And thence the poet's high instruction, by turning this divine light of the beautiful upon the education of man, may be most efficacious, revealing to him more clearly his resources.

One of the poet's privileges it is that, subject, through excess of sensibility, to keener pain as well as to livelier joy, —

> (Quanto la cosa è più perfetta,
> Più senta il bene, e cosi la dolghenza), [1] —

he eases the pain and heightens the joy by transfiguring them into poetry. Inasmuch as to the poet all life may glisten with poetry, his being, while it is exalted, is enlarged in proportion to the range of his other faculties; so that his individuality may, like Shakespeare's or Gœthe's, become almost representative of the universe.

[1] Dante, *Inf.*, c. vi.

To the enjoyment, to the very continuance, of this Elysian freedom, Dorothy was more than auxiliary. By her sympathy — a sympathy so genuine that it was actively coöperative — she not only sweetened its possession, she helped it to be. With a poet's eye and feeling herself, but without vanity, without pretension, she threw all her stock into the venture of her brother: she lived for him and in him; while by her sparkling intelligence and cheerful companionship she breathed upon the strenuous poet's every day and hour the breath of a renovating spring.

Could poet, with the deep inwardness of Wordsworth, be more favored outwardly? Picturesque, rural nature, its charms redoubled by the impress of man's judicious hand; man himself in his less sophisticated condition of country seclusion, with a background in the poet's memory of congregated humanity in huge cities. And then, when he and Dorothy, who never tired of each other, wished for conversational refreshment from without, by an hour's walk they found themselves listening to the rich, fluent speech of him who was already the most fascinating, the widest and deepest talker in England, — a clear-sighted, generous appreciator of his brother-poet, and in whom was no

jealousy to restrain the utterance of his admiration, — an admiration which to Wordsworth was the most inspiriting, fortifying cordial the world could offer him. Through his whole after-life, Coleridge never relaxed in this estimate of the poetic genius of his friend, and by the printed as well as oral expression of it did much to enlighten the judgment of criticism in regard to Wordsworth. Coleridge, himself a great poet, paid him this disinterested, exquisite, but somewhat excessive tribute: "He strides so far before us that he dwarfs himself in the distance."

VII.

LYRICAL BALLADS.

WHAT may be called the occasion of beginning the "Lyrical Ballads" was the wish to earn five pounds, to pay for an excursion; their cause lay much deeper, namely, in the mental conformation of the two poets. In their conversations on the sources of poetic interest, they agreed that a series of poems might be written of two sorts: in the one the incidents and agents were to be in part supernatural, and were to move and hold the sympathy of the reader through their human feeling and dramatic truth; in the other, subjects were to be taken from real and ordinary life in the village and country. Coleridge was to write poems of the first class, Wordsworth of the second. In the "Biographia Literaria" Coleridge thus describes their respective tasks: "It was agreed that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a

semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself, as his object, to give the charm of novelty to the things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand."

In putting the plan into execution, Wordsworth was so much more industrious, and the number of his pieces so much greater, that what his associate contributed seemed to be, says Coleridge, "an interpolation of heterogeneous matter." The heterogeneous matter was, however, chiefly the immortal "Ancient Mariner," which takes up fifty pages, or about one quarter of the volume.

Under the sway of a large humanity of individual nature, favored by early associations and impressions in secluded, unaristocratic Cumberland, and nourished by the deeper spirit of

the times (a cardinal characteristic of which was a more diffused fellow-feeling, an expansion and warming of the human heart towards man as man), Wordsworth had from the first been moved to note the condition of the humbler class of his fellow-men, and to hear in their heart-throb a deep poetic music. In his first printed poem, "An Evening Walk," we have seen that the only human being introduced is a destitute wayfaring mother with her two children, —

> "Denied to lay her head,
> On cold, blue nights, in hut or straw-built shed.

In the next one, "Descriptive Sketches," we catch on the southern side of the Alps a glimpse of a wandering gypsy, —

> "A nursling babe, her only comforter," —

and on the northern side, an enthusiastic description of the Swiss cottager, — a description so abstract, that it opens with Rousseau's fallacy about the savage state being the freest and most manly: —

> "Once man entirely free, alone and wild,
> Was blest as free, for he was nature's child."

Of his third poem, "Guilt and Sorrow," the chief personages are a wandering widowed soldier's wife and a criminal, repentant sailor.

And now, in a new volume, made up of twenty pieces, the same spirit prevails, or rather, the same principle rules. The lowly and obscure are dragged forth to be suddenly presented to the world, crowned with the immortal wreath of poetry, — presented to the astonished protesting world. For are not knights and ladies, kings and princesses, paladins and crusaders, the legitimate themes, and palaces and castles the congenial haunts, of poesy? And here vagrants and idiots and washerwomen, instead of being left to starve in huts, and freeze under hedge-rows, are thrust upon our notice, and, through the magic of genius, — which defies the externalities of circumstance, whether splendent or homely, — are placed before and beside us in their naked, irresistible humanity.

One of the longer poems of the volume is "The Thorn." Imagine a reader, in the first quarter of this century, fresh from the "Giaour," and "Lara," and "Lalla Rookh," and "The Lady of the Lake," coming upon "The Thorn" unexpectedly. The public being unprepared for such a return to nature, its judgment, too, misled by the half-criticism of its Jeffreys and Giffords, in nine readers out of ten the feeling would be distaste, or even disgust, ex-

pressed by exclamations, "How tame! How absurd!" But the tenth reader, a little baffled, a little disappointed, would read it over a second time, and then the story would haunt him so, that the next day he would read it a third time. "The Thorn" is the old story, ever old and ever new, of betrayal and desertion, set in a fresh frame, told with a new and terrible pathos, which leaves him, who can read it a third or fourth time, with his sympathy deepened, his moral nature strengthened, and in his ear a music that has the simplicity and the significance of some strains of Beethoven.

One of the shorter poems is called "Goody Blake and Harry Gill," a name which, in its low realism, is a prejudgment against the poem in the readers of Marmions and Don Rodericks and Childe Harolds. This is the story: A woman, poor and old, lives alone in a hut on the north side of a bleak hill. She has not clothes enough to keep her warm in winter days, nor blankets enough for cold nights in her hard bed. And so, in the middle of the night, when winds have blown down the dead branches, she would go out to the hedge of Harry Gill to fill her apron with sticks. Now Harry, a well-to-do lusty drover, had long suspected old Goody of this trespass, and one cold

moonlit midnight he pounced upon her with her apron full of sticks. "I 've caught you, then, at last," he cried, as he seized and held her fast by the arm and shook her. Goody let fall the bundle of sticks, and, kneeling upon it, —

> "She prayed, her withered hand uprearing,
> While Harry held her by the arm —
> *God! who art never out of hearing,*
> *O may he never more be warm!*
> The cold, cold moon above her head,
> Thus on her knees did Goody pray;
> Young Harry heard what she had said:
> And icy cold he turned away."

And he never was warm again: —

> "In March, December, and in July,
> 'T is all the same with Harry Gill;
> The neighbors tell, and tell you truly,
> His teeth they chatter, chatter still."

A high achievement it is of the poet when he can make an incident or a conjunction the focus of so much light that it sends far and wide the beams of a momentous, universal truth. The poet who does this, does it, not by directly aiming to inculcate a moral lesson, — a prosaic proceeding, — but by kindling his thought at the torch of spiritual and moral beauty. Put now before the mind's eye this picture, — a poor, lonely, old woman, thinly clad, kneeling in the cold moonlight on the

bundle of sticks she has dropt, her arm still clutched by the rich owner of the hedge, she praying "may he never more be warm," and he turning away, chilled to the heart, never to be warm again. What a light is here flashed upon the vast field of human conduct. All over the earth the precept, "Be kind to the poor," is acknowledged and partially practiced. But here, through the plastic gift of the poet, a common occurrence is elevated into a generic act to set forth a cardinal human obligation; and sets it forth with an efficiency that carries it with a new emphasis into the soul.

Wordsworth calls this poem "A true story," whether meaning thereby that the moral shock to Harry was so penetrating that it wrought thus powerfully on his physical being, or that the story poetically depicts the unfailing doom of the rich who are hard to the poor, thus exciting a feeling, as Coleridge says above, analogous to the supernatural.

Of Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads," the longest is "The Idiot Boy," the wonder of which is, not as has been said by unsusceptive, and therefore half critics, that a poet should make an idiot boy the subject of a poem, but that by his treatment of such a subject he should have wiped off from it all repulsiveness, and,

by what may be called the magic of poetic tenderness, have built out of three such unpromising figures as two lowly women and the idiot son of one of them, a story which fascinates and delights the competent reader. This it does by letting him into the minute confidence of the healthy human heart, and especially the maternal heart. So warmly intimate is the poet with this heart, that he is empowered to make to the reader instructive discoveries, charming revelations. And all the picture set in the serenity of a clear moonlit night, with its shapes and its sounds, —

> "She listens, but she cannot hear
> The foot of horse, the voice of man;
> The streams with softest sound are flowing,
> The grass you almost hear it growing,
> You hear it now if e'er you can."

"The Idiot Boy" is an incomparable artistic feat. That with such ordinary material the poet should be able to enlist the reader's full interest and sympathy proves how the rich personality of the poet, handled by his genius, illuminating his intellect, is the all in all in poetry, in fresh, deep poetry. The simpler the material, the greater and more original the powers needed to mould it into form of permanent poetic worth.

Wordsworth was a profound naturalist. His inborn sympathies laid bare to him the human soul in its manifold manifestations, opened to him the natural beauties of earth and sky, and gave him mysterious intimations from the invisible. Ever around him was teeming changeful nature, lovingly embraced by his sensuous eye, and ever above him, in his religious consciousness, the supervisive might, with its infinite spirituality. Wordsworth's poems were a new world and a strange, and thence they had, by means of native force and genius, to create the taste wherewith they were to be enjoyed and judged. The refined, cultivated, clear-sighted, true-hearted, high-spoken Sara Coleridge, daughter of S. T. C., says justly: "That those poems were not generally admired from the first, was, in my opinion, their *own fault;* that is to say, arose principally from their being works of great genius, and, consequently, though old as the world itself, in one way, yet in another, a new thing under the sun."

Another poem in the first issue of "Lyrical Ballads" is "We are Seven;" and another proof of how out of the collision between a susceptible poetic mind, and pure deep nature, flash forth fresh rhythmic strains perfectly

original, owing nothing to foregone poems or narrations, but springing and sparkling with new joy from a heart touched by the simple play of other human hearts, —

> "A simple child,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What can it know of death?"

Many subjects there are, knowledge of which is acquired by experience, whereof a child can know nothing; but, so far as experience can teach what death is, a child of eight years may already have had its little heart grieved through the stiffening before its eyes of the limbs of a pet bird or kitten, besides being awed by the passing away of her little brother and sister. When "the little Maid," in the face of the poet's demonstration to her, that two being dead, there could now be only five, persisted in saying, "We are seven," it may be that she spoke deeper than the poet wrote. Her spiritual sense, asserting its supremacy, counted by souls not bodies. The essential human being is the invisible spirit, not the visible body; and the little girl felt by instinct that her brother and sister, though their bodies lay in the churchyard, were not dead. Possibly, when playing round their little graves, she felt their

presence. Nay, may not her natural eyes have been at times so purged of earthly grossness as to have been able to see their spiritual bodies? There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, or in your theology.

The last poem in the first volume of "Lyrical Ballads" he was moved to write by revisiting the banks of the Wye, above Tintern Abbey. The same scenes had been enjoyed five years before, in his twenty-fourth year, at which youthful period, —

> "The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood;
> Their colors and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite; a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye."

That time, he continues, is past, with its "aching joys," its "dizzy raptures. He has become more thoughtful: —

> "For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interposed,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

The whole poem is steeped in beauty, is aglow with poetic thought, and might be called a pæan to Nature by her chief worshipper. The latter part is addressed in an impassioned strain to devoted, beloved Dorothy, his companion. Younger than he, in her voice he heard the language of his former heart; in the "shooting lights of her wild eyes" he read his former pleasures: —

"Oh, yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear sister! And this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 't is her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings."

Wordsworth's healthy practice of making the

sky the roof of his study, working out his poetry as he walked in the open air, led to the habit of carrying a poem in his memory uncommitted to paper. "Tintern Abbey" was composed during a ramble of four or five days between Tintern and Bristol, — a poem of one hundred and fifty lines of blank verse. Not a sentence of it was written down until he reached Bristol, and in writing it not a line was altered.

The first edition of "Lyrical Ballads" was of five hundred copies, but "the sale was so slow," writes the Bristol publisher, Cottle, "and the severity of most of the reviews so great, that its progress to oblivion seemed certain. I parted with the largest portion of the five hundred at a loss, to Mr. Arch, a London bookseller." Shortly afterwards, Cottle, on retiring from business, transferred all his copyrights to Messrs. Longman. In valuing the several copyrights, that of the "Lyrical Ballads" was put down at *nil.* Mr. Cottle therefore begged that it might be returned to him; and he presented it to the authors.

The "Lyrical Ballads" appeared in the beginning of September, 1798, and on the sixteenth of that month Wordsworth, his sister, and Coleridge, sailed from Yarmouth for Hamburg.

VIII.

GOSLAR.

To the two poets the most important personage in Hamburg was a brother poet; the most interesting incident of their sojourn there, an interview with him. The poet was Klopstock, then in his seventy-fourth year, and still a high reputation at home and abroad. At the time of Klopstock's rise there was in Germany no poet of the depth and breadth and rhythm required to give permanence to poetic work; and criticism was hardly fledged; so that, about a mechanical poet, with little inspiration and not much art, such as Klopstock was, there floated a nimbus of reputation which, on the arrival of more genuine bards, began at once to evaporate. The conversations between Klopstock and his two English visitors betray, on his part, not only shallowness of judgment, but a total absence of that critical perception which is a ray cast by creative fire. He preferred Glover to Milton; thought that Wieland's mastery over his native language was

far superior to that of Goethe; did not like the Fool in Lear; looked upon Wolfe as a sounder metaphysician than Kant. Speaking of tragedies, he rated high the power of exciting tears; to which Wordsworth replied, "that nothing was easier than to deluge an audience; that it was done every day by the meanest writers."

At Hamburg Coleridge parted from the Wordsworths, going first to Ratzeburg and afterwards to Goettingen. Wordsworth and his sister established themselves for the autumn and winter in Goslar, at the foot of the Hartz Mountains. In accelerating their acquirement of German (the purpose of their visit to Germany) through social intercourse, they were disappointed. Goslar was an old, decayed town, and such are not noted for hospitality; moreover, Dorothy was an obstacle. Coleridge writes to Wordsworth from Ratzeburg: "You have two things against you: your not loving smoke, and your sister. If the manners at Goslar resemble those at Ratzeburg, it is necessary to be able to bear smoke. Here, when my friends come to see me, the candle nearly goes out, the air is so thick."

With Dorothy by his side, Wordsworth was actively productive. In this very cold winter of 1798–9, the coldest of the century, he wrote

some of his best and most characteristic shorter poems, among others "Lucy Gray":—

"No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wide moor,
The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door!"

The solitude of a strange land and language were propitious to the meditative poet. As for his themes, he took none of them from scenes around him. There is not a stanza or a line about the Brocken. Poetry the poet makes of what he has seen and felt and stored away, not of what he sees. Things wrought into images in his brain, not images painted on his outward eye, are his material. So much is this the case, that if he has to depict a man present before him, he removes him away from the sensuous visibility in which he stands there, removes him into the interior of his cerebral work-shop, to re-image him there, to subject him to the divulging light of poetic imagination. He takes the man into the intimacy of his mental forge and recreates him. He who cannot perform this visionary feat is no poet. And the same subtle process is gone through by every poetic painter of portraits. During the months that Wordsworth lived at Orleans he wrote no line about the Loire, but worked at his "Descrip-

tive Sketches," at scenes through which he had passed the year before. The poet's tools are imaginations, and with these, polished by the passionate light of the beautiful, he transmutes, transfigures reality, making it, according to the degree of his gifts, more transparently, more delightfully real, piercing to its core, revealing its affinity with an essential, eternal ideal.

The isolation in a foreign land helped to kindle memories of home into poetic imaginations: —

> "I traveled among unknown men,
> In lands beyond the sea;
> Nor, England, did I know till then,
> What love I bore to thee."

The exquisite poems relating to Lucy were all written this winter. From the solitude of the Hartz Mountains the poet's memory flew back to his opening manhood, and his imagination, radiant with poetic glow, wrought upon early tender impressions to mould them into glistening diamonds of verse. A more felicitous, original, sigificant little poem (it is of only forty-two lines) never was warbled out of the heart, even of Wordsworth, than the stanzas beginning, "Three years she grew in sun and shower." Never was the active, purifying influence of nature more lovingly exemplified

than in the growth of this sweet Lucy. Here are two of the seven stanzas: —

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
Nor shall she fail to see,
Even in the motion of the storm,
Grace that shall mould the maiden form
By silent sympathy.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face."

In Wordsworth the intellectual mental constituent is ever there to brace the sentimental, his art bringing about a close musical marriage between thought and feeling, — the fruit of happy meditation coming to the surface buoyed on the rhythm of healthful sensibility. The following stanzas are taken from "A Poet's Epitaph" (written this winter), and, in addition to their fresh beauty and significance, have an interest as being a portrait — whether so intended or not — of Wordsworth himself: —

"But who is he with modest looks,
And clad in homely russet brown?
He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.

"He is retired as noontide dew,
Or fountain in a noonday grove;
And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

"The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.

"In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart, —
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart."

In Goslar, going back to his school-days, he wrote, in his best vein, — the vein of rhythmic, tender thoughtfulness, — those three poems, "Mathew," "The two April Mornings," and "The Fountain." All three have a solid foundation in fact, all relating to one of the head-masters at Hawkshead, and each is a poetic pathetic tribute to his kindly teacher, Taylor, to whom, as we have seen, he devoted some grateful lines in "The Prelude."

Between the parted companions at Ratzeburg and Goslar warm intercourse was kept up through letters, Wordsworth sending some of his poems to Coleridge, and receiving, in return, cordial comments. In one of his letters Coleridge says to Wordsworth: "I am sure I need not say how you are incorporated into

the better part of my being; how, whenever I spring forward into the future with noble affections, I always alight by your side." In another he discusses hexameters, and sends as a sample, composed when he was ill and wakeful, twenty or thirty lines full of vivacity and fun, which end, —

"William, my head and my heart! dear William and dear Dorothea!
You have all in each other, but I am lonely, and want you."

In February, 1799, Wordsworth and Dorothy quitted Goslar, and after paying a visit to Coleridge at Goettingen, returned to England early in the spring.

IX.

GRASMERE.

THE summer of 1799 Wordsworth and his sister spent for the most part with their cousins, the Hutchinsons, at Sockburn-on-Tees. In September Wordsworth, accompanied by Coleridge, went into Westmoreland and Cumberland. Coleridge saw the Lake Country for the first time. The impression made upon him is shown in the following sentence of a letter to Dorothy: "At Rydal and Grasmere I received, I think, the deepest delight; yet Hawes-water, through many a varying view, kept my eyes dim with tears."

Wordsworth hired a small house in Grasmere; he and his sister took possession at the end of December, on St. Thomas's day, after what he calls "our wild winter journey from Sockburn,"—

> "The naked trees,
> The icy brooks, as on we passed, appeared
> To question us, 'Whence come ye? to what end?'"

On the journey they passed the spring which

gives the name to the poem "Hart-leap Well." The tale of the poor hunted hart is just one to set Wordsworth's pen in motion. That tender familiarity with the spirit that breathes through all creation, that privileged reverential intimacy with the very soul of being, which Wordsworth had gained by his religious love of nature, and his sympathy with all forms of life, is hardly anywhere more apparent than in the second part of "Hart-leap Well." Talking with the "gray-headed shepherd," who related to him the legend, and telling him of the restorative power of nature, he ends the poem with this stanza:—

"One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals:
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

The cottage in which, at the end of 1799, Wordsworth and his sister took up their abode for eight years, stood (and stands) beside, and on the right of, the road from Ambleside to Keswick, at the entrance to the village of Grasmere. The front looked towards the lake; in the rear were a small orchard and garden, with a spring and rocks, from which rises the wooded mountain.

And now, nothing daunted by the seeming

failure of the first, Wordsworth put forth a second volume of "Lyrical Ballads," made of poems written, many of them, in Germany. The first volume was republished, and, the other being added, the two were issued by Longman in 1800.

A copy of the two Wordsworth sent to Charles James Fox, with a long letter of apology and explanation. The key to the sending and to the letter is found in the subjoined sentence, which opens its third paragraph, — a sentence, which is an honorable tribute to Fox, and records a noble characteristic, which distinguishes him from most public men: as political and social affairs are now organized, they who get to be leaders among legislators and administrators are, for the most part, the worldly and the ambitious, and are therefore wanting in the finer sensibilities: "In common with the whole of the English people, I have observed in your public character a constant predominance of sensibility of heart."

Fox answered the letter graciously. His critical discernment was not equal to giving him a hint of the high distinction this singling of him out by a young poet would be to him with future generations; but by his insight he vindicated Wordsworth's partiality, —

"admiring many poems in the collection," and specifying as his favorites, "Harry Gill," "We are Seven," "The Mad Mother," and "The Idiot Boy." There was in Fox's nature a deep simplicity which, in spite of early influences and worldly sophistications, kept the bottom of his heart sound, and put him at once into sympathy with Wordsworth's mind and its unique poetic product. Had Pitt been thus honored, probably the most he would have done would have been to acknowledge courteously the receipt of the volumes before looking into them, and then to have laid them aside unread. And it may be doubted whether Burke — to whom, in "The Prelude," Wordsworth pays so rich a tribute — would have done much more. Burke was not primitive enough to have put himself in affectionate relation with such unacknowledged specimens of humanity as Wordsworth selects to wear his laurel wreaths; nor, to judge by his treatise on "The Sublime and Beautiful," was his literary insight very penetrating.

In the little cottage at Grasmere, where Wordsworth and his sister had planted themselves, there was "plain living and high thinking." In that district of simple habits a more frugal household could hardly be found than that of William and Dorothy. It was not in

Wordsworth's inclinations to be otherwise than frugal: a man disposed to self-indulgence could not have written his poems. To be its best, poetry must be sincere: its liveliest, cleanest current is a stream from the inmost life of the poet. The poem and poet must be at one: a discord between their two lives taints and slackens the poetic current. Hence, when the poet's mind is rich in resources, earnest sincerity brings forth those gems of feeling in whose sparkle is recognized the everlasting glow of humanity. And so Wordsworth, at first decried, ridiculed by the self-sufficient, incompetent Aristarchs of his day, soon won the favor of the judicious and the susceptible, — to work himself gradually, by dint of cordial truthfulness to nature, into the firmest place among his great contemporaneous brother bards.

The fire that cooked the simple meals of that cottage sent up its smoke to mingle modestly with the smoke of the other cottages of the village; but near the hearth whence it ascended was an altar, unrecognized then and there, whereon was fed, by most religious self-dedicated votaries, a flame which was to be for the world a holy perennial light.

About the beautiful region they had chosen for their home the poet and his sister walked

enchanted, seeing new scenes, discovering new beauties, and producing new poems, — ay, *new* poems; and the number of such, of really new poems, is at any time very small.

Some entries in Miss Wordsworth's "Diary," during these first two years at Grasmere, will let us into the mode of their daily life.

"Oct. 10, 1801. Coleridge went to Keswick. 11th. Mr. and Mrs. Sympson came in after tea, and supped with us.

"Oct. 24. Went to Greenhead Ghyll, and the sheepfold.

"Nov. 6. Coleridge came.

"Nov. 9. Walked with Coleridge to Keswick.

"Nov. 18. William walked to Rydal. The lake of Grasmere beautiful.

"Nov. 24. Read Chaucer. We walked by Gell's cottage. [Sir William Gell.] As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance perhaps of fifty yards from our favorite birch-tree: it was yielding to the gust of wind, with all its tender twigs; the sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower: it was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water. . . . After our return William read Spenser to us, and then walked to John's grove. Went to meet W.

"Feb. 5, 1802. William came with two affecting letters from Coleridge, resolved to try another climate. . . . . Translated two or three of Lessing's Fables. At this time William hard at work on "The Pedlar."

"March, Wednesday. W. reading Ben Jonson.

"Thursday. W. writing the 'Singing Bird; or, the Sailor's Mother.' Mr. Clarkson came.

"Friday. Read the remainder of Lessing. William wrote 'Alice Fell.'"

The humbleness of the subject of this little poem brought upon Wordsworth the ridicule of the small critics, so that from policy "Alice Fell" was excluded from several editions of his poems, until restored at the request of several friends, in particular, his son-in-law, Edward Quillinan. In thus, for a time, suppressing this poem, the poet did wrong, and I am surprised that William Wordsworth should have done it. He did a wrong to himself, to the public, to Alice. What regard should be paid to critics who have not that union of sensibility and culture indispensable to genuine criticism? Is not a poor, ragged orphan girl our sister? Are not her sudden distress, its cause and its cure, worthy to be taken into the heart of a great poet, to be there rhythmically

arrayed? And thus arrayed, do they not leave in the mind of the reader an effective picture and a tender, purifying emotion? "Alice Fell" was suggested by a fact told by a visitor.

Walks, readings, visits, none of them were barren. In one of these walks the poet represents himself to be in an exhilarated mood, communing with nature, enjoying the happiness of all living things, on a sunny day after a heavy night storm:—

"All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops; on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run."

But in the height of his joy there fell upon him, he knew not whence, a sudden dejection, so that, from being in a jubilant state of feeling, he sank into anxious forebodings:—

"But there may come another day to me—
Solitude, pain of heart, distress and poverty."

Then comes in the noted stanza about Chatterton and Burns:—

"I thought of Chatterton, the marvelous boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride;
Of him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plow, along the mountain-side:
By our own spirits are we deified:

"We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness."

None of the poets of his great day for poets (nor of any other day except Shakespeare) added to daily speech so many phrases and lines, adopted for their aptness and significancy. In this single stanza are several such, especially that deep, exalting declaration, —

"By our own spirits are we deified."

From his gloomy despondency how is the poet rescued? Suddenly, in a lonely place, —

"Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven
I saw a man before me unawares:
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore gray hairs."

Then follows that marvelous description, which draws the reader into the body and very being of the old man. He was a leech-gatherer, who made a poor living by seeking them from pool to pool; a lonely man who had lost his wife and all his ten children, who now, feeble from old age, leant on the staff with which he stirred the pools for leeches. And yet, he smiled as he spoke, and was cheerful and uncomplaining: —

"I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit man so firm a mind.
'God,' said I, 'be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!'"

In poetry the subject is secondary, the poet primary. As Joubert says: "You will find poetry nowhere unless you bring some with you." And equally true is it, that you will find it everywhere if you bring much with you; especially if you are spiritually-minded, that is, if you habitually look through the body into the soul of things, for "poetry consists," — again I quote Joubert, — "above all, in the spirituality of ideas." If Joubert had been studying Wordsworth, — of whom he probably never heard, — he could not more clearly have given the essential quality of his poetry. In a letter in 1845 to his friend Professor Henry Reed, of Philadelphia, editor of the American edition of the "Memoirs," Wordsworth, then in his seventy-sixth year, mentions an interview he had recently had with Tennyson, who expressed to him gratitude for his writings. "To this," continues Wordsworth, "I was far from indifferent, though persuaded that he is not much in sympathy with what I should myself most value in my attempts, namely, the spirituality with which I have endeavored to invest the material universe, and the moral relations under which I have wished to exhibit its most ordinary appearances." And this is just the reason why Tennyson, so inferior to Words-

worth in mental calibre, poetic sensitiveness, and in insight, is more popular than Wordsworth: he is more sensuous and superficial; and most readers, even of the better class who read poetry, prefer not to be called upon for new effort either in the direction of intellect or sentiment.

In the "Memoirs" a striking illustration of what may be termed the spiritual idealism of Wordsworth is furnished, taken from his manuscripts. He says that in childhood it was difficult for him to admit the notion of death as applicable to himself; and that he was often "unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw, as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times, while going to school, have I grasped at a wall or tree, to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character."

What a life the two led in that cottage! Frugality was the basis for a superstructure of noble, indefatigable work, mind-work, incited by poetic inspiration. They read to feed their thoughts. Thus, one afternoon in 1801 Dorothy was reading to her brother the sonnets of

Milton. He knew them well already, but happening to be in the mood to be "particularly struck with the dignified simplicity and majestic harmony that runs through most of them, I took fire, if I may be allowed to say so, and produced three sonnets the same afternoon, the first I ever wrote, except one irregular one at school." Such was Wordsworth's initiation into a form of verse peculiarly adapted to him, — a form brief, compact, ever ready to receive and to tempt the overflowings of his meditative, generative mind. In the course of his long, industrious life he wrote over five hundred sonnets; that is, five hundred poems of fourteen lines each, differing, of course, in merit, but hardly one of which does not give out some of the fragrance of a pure, high humanity. Here is one of these first three. An admirable sonnet in thought, structure, and rhythm, it shows clear insight into the character of the First Consul: —

1801.

"I grieved for Bonaparte, with a vain
And an unthinking grief! The tenderest mood
Of that Man's mind — what can it be? What food
Fed his first hopes? What knowledge could *he* gain?
'T is not in battles that from youth we train
The Governor who must be wise and good,
And temper with the sternness of the brain
Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.

Wisdom doth live with children round her knees:
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
Of the mind's business: these are the degrees
By which true Sway doth mount; this is the stalk
True Power doth grow on; and her rights are these."

X.

MARY.

THE life at the Wordsworth cottage in Grasmere, high as it was, was to be made still higher, was to be fuller, to be more beautiful, by having more life added to it. The following entry is taken from Miss Wordsworth's Diary: "Oct. 4, 1802. William was married at Brompton Church to Mary Hutchinson..... We arrived in Grasmere at six in the evening, on Oct. 6, 1802."

We have seen how Wordsworth was blessed in Dorothy, what a delightful stimulus had been to him the companionship, what a joy the admiration, of Coleridge. The capital blessing of his life was his marriage. It was a complete mating, a union of diverse constituents that made a musical harmony. This union had been long foreshadowed. Referring, in "The Prelude," to a period four or five years earlier, when Dorothy had been recently restored to him, he there speaks of Mary:—

"Another maid there was, who also shed
A gladness o'er that season, then to me,
By her exulting outside look of youth
And placid under-countenance, first endeared."

Dorothy and Mary were like two attached sisters. The coming of Mary into the cottage as the wife of William, Dorothy did not feel as a wrong done to her, but as a good; she did not look upon it as an encroachment on her rights, but as an enlargement of them. Mary was tall and fair, Dorothy of moderate height and dark; equally unlike mentally, Dorothy having more vivacity and ardor than Mary, these and other differences made no discord between them, but only gave more liveliness to their concord. In their sympathy with the poet they were alike. It has been shown how Dorothy abetted him in his poetic moods and efforts. Among his published poems Wordsworth has inserted several by her. And although I believe none of Mary's are given, she furnished two lines in one of the best of his shorter poems, and those two the best lines in it. "The Daffodils" consists of only four stanzas of six lines each. After describing in three stanzas the discovery of them and their appearance, stretching along the margin of a bay, the last stanza is as follows:—

"For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils."

The two central lines, so profound and beautiful, were written by Mrs. Wordsworth:—

"They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude."

De Quincey, who first saw Mrs. Wordsworth five years after her marriage, thus concludes a description of her countenance: "All faults, had they been ten times more and greater, would have been swallowed up or neutralized by that supreme expression of her features, to the intense unity of which every lineament in the fixed parts, and every undulation in the moving parts, or play of her countenance, concurred, namely, a sunny benignity, — a radiant gracefulness — such as I never saw equaled or approached."

But Mary Wordsworth has the privilege of being portrayed in one of the most beautiful poems in literature, and that written by her husband, — a poem that enriches the paper it is printed on, brightens the eye that reads it, refreshes the heart that hears it. It cannot be too often repeated: —

"She was a Phantom of delight
When first she gleam'd upon my sight;
A lovely Apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament:
Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn;
A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

"I saw her upon nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

"And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveler between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect Woman, nobly plann'd
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light." [1804.

In the middle of August, 1803, William and Dorothy, leaving Mary in the cottage, with "little John" for company and comfort, set out

for a tour in Scotland, stopping at Keswick to take up their old traveling companion, Coleridge. They had a car with one horse to carry their modest luggage and for themselves occasionally to mount, but most of the journey was on foot. The tour of six weeks was described in the Diary of Miss Wordsworth, recently published in one volume, which shows how a succession of descriptions of scenery can be made readable by a sprightly poetic mind inspired by delight in nature.

They stood before the grave of Burns, repeating to each other his own touching lines: —

"Is there a man, whose judgment clear,
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
Wild as the wave;
Here let him pause, and through a tear,
Survey this grave.

"The poor Inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stained his name!"

Passing through Glasgow and the Lake District about Loch Lomond they returned by Edinburgh and the Tweed, meeting for the first time Walter Scott, who for two or three days

was their companion and guide. The impression then made on Wordsworth by Scott is thus given in a letter written many years afterwards: "We were received with that frank cordiality which, under whatever circumstances I afterwards met him, always marked his manners; and indeed I found him then in every respect — except, perhaps that his animal spirits were somewhat higher — precisely the same man that you knew in later life: the same lively, entertaining conversation, full of anecdote and averse from disquisition; the same unaffected modesty about himself; the same cheerful and benevolent and hopeful views of man and the world."

The travelers (Coleridge had parted from them near Loch Lomond) reached home, September twenty-fifth, to find "Mary in perfect health, Joanna Hutchinson with her, and John asleep in the clothes-basket by the fire."

William and Dorothy had been on a foraging tour and brought back rich booty. At Inversnyde, on Loch Lomond, while waiting in a ferry-house, Wordsworth was so affected by the exceeding loveliness of the ferryman's sister, a young girl of fourteen summers, that he pours upon her torrent upon torrent of admiration, in a succession of melodious stanzas of

unequal lengths, that fix her image upon paper forever in the shining drapery of genius, and are a sparkling illustration of the blissful dominion of beauty over the poetic heart:—

"Sweet Highland Girl, a very shower
Of beauty is thy earthly dower!
Twice seven consenting years have shed
Their utmost bounty on thy head."

He then enumerates the features of the scenes around her, concluding the first stanza as follows:—

"Yet, dream or vision as thou art,
I bless thee with a human heart:
God shield thee to thy latest years!
I neither know thee nor thy peers;
And yet my eyes are filled with tears."

The second opens thus:—

"With earnest feeling I shall pray
For thee when I am far away:
For never saw I mien or face,
In which more plainly I could trace
Benignity and home-bred sense
Ripening in perfect innocence."

The third begins:—

"What hand but would a garland cull
For thee who art so beautiful?
O happy pleasure! here to dwell
Beside thee in some heathy dell;
Adopt your homely ways, and dress
A shepherd, thou a shepherdess!"

In the fourth and last, the enraptured poet

utters his gratitude that he has been blest with such a sight:—

"Now thanks to Heaven! that of its grace
Hath led me to this lonely place.
Joy have I had; and going hence
I bear away my recompense.
For I, methinks, till I grow old,
As fair before me shall behold,
As I do now, the cabin small,
The lake, the bay, the waterfall;
And Thee, the Spirit of them all."

After visiting the grave of Burns, Wordsworth addressed to the sons of Burns some heartfelt sympathy and admonition in that form of verse their father so loved. Here are the first and last stanzas:—

"'Mid crowded obelisks and urns
I sought the untimely grave of Burns:
Sons of the Bard, my heart still mourns
With sorrow true;
And more would grieve, but that it turns
Trembling to you.

"Let no mean hope your souls enslave;
Be independent, generous, brave;
Your Father such example gave,
And such revere;
But be admonished by his grave,
And think, and fear!"

Out of what common incidents the heart of a poet can draw poetry! He puts new life into common themes, or rather, through poetic

Milton. He knew them well already, but happening to be in the mood to be "particularly struck with the dignified simplicity and majestic harmony that runs through most of them, I took fire, if I may be allowed to say so, and produced three sonnets the same afternoon, the first I ever wrote, except one irregular one at school." Such was Wordsworth's initiation into a form of verse peculiarly adapted to him, — a form brief, compact, ever ready to receive and to tempt the overflowings of his meditative, generative mind. In the course of his long, industrious life he wrote over five hundred sonnets; that is, five hundred poems of fourteen lines each, differing, of course, in merit, but hardly one of which does not give out some of the fragrance of a pure, high humanity. Here is one of these first three. An admirable sonnet in thought, structure, and rhythm, it shows clear insight into the character of the First Consul: —

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'T is not in battles that from youth we train
The Governor who must be wise and good,
And temper with the sternness of the brain
Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.

"Two books more will conclude it. It will be not much less than nine thousand lines, — not hundred but thousand lines long, — an alarming length! and a thing unprecedented in literary history that a man should talk so much about himself. It is not self-conceit, as you will know well, that has induced me to do this, but real humility. I began the work because I was *unprepared* to treat *any more arduous subject and diffident of my own powers.* Here, at least, I hoped that, to a certain degree, I should be sure of succeeding, as I had nothing to do but describe what I had felt and thought, and therefore could not easily be bewildered. This might have been done in narrower compass by a man of more address; but I have done my best. If, when the work shall be finished, it appears to the judicious to have redundancies, they shall be lopped off, if possible; but this is very difficult to do, when a man has written with thought; and this defect, whenever I have suspected it, or found it to exist in any writings of mine, I have always found incurable. The fault lies too deep, and is in the first conception."

Wordsworth's volume, albeit a poem, has a realistic advantage over Goethe's celebrated prose autobiography, "Wahrheit und Dich-

tung" (Fact and Imagination), in that it is written in the midst of the growth, while the subtle process described was still in its ferment, the record being thus made by a hand which was like the index of an active machine, whose motion registers its rate. Whereas Goethe's record was set down by effort of memory, instead of in the warm presence of the mental transformation, more than threescore years throwing something like a veil of distance over the facts. The consciousness of this dictated to Goethe his very appropriate title, literal truth of fact being at times in his recital encroached upon by involuntary modifications of the imagination.

Wordsworth touches upon a profound critical principle when, at the end of the above extract, he says that his work being done with thought, it is difficult to lop off redundancies, the fault lying in the first conception. In "The Prelude," as in "The Excursion," and in some of the longer of his other poems, there are occasionally what the French call *des longueurs*, passages which may be traced in a measure to self-complacency in his own work, which, perhaps, a deficiency of humor prevented him from rectifying; and in some cases to a lack of power to condense. His self-estimation, which

in one so grandly constituted as he was stood at times almost in the stead of a virtue, may have led him to mistake that as poetical which was only egotistical, such devilish tricks will self-esteem play the best of us. Other poets and men of letters have all Wordsworth's self-sufficiency without his self-sufficingness. He was self-sufficing from the largeness of his powers, and especially from the predominance over his thought and his conduct of the deep saving qualities of human nature, those qualities which give to it its essential humanity, — the moral and spiritual attributes of man, — in Wordsworth ever present and active; so that, when we come upon exhibitions of too much self-consciousness, we can smile forgivingly, and not, as with some other eminent writers, be withheld from an indignant frown by charity and sense of humility. Of Wordsworth may be said what Coleridge said of Milton: "The egotism of such a man is a revelation of spirit."

"The Prelude" is dedicated to Coleridge, whom, in the course of the volume, he frequently appeals to, as he does towards the end in the following retrospective lines: —

> "Thus, O Friend!
> Through times of honor and through times of shame
> Descending, have I faithfully retraced

The perturbations of a youthful mind
Under a long-lived storm of great events, —
A story destined for thy ear."

"The Prelude" may be characterized as being at once precise and poetical, exalted and simple, profound yet obvious, transcendent yet clear. This remarkable poem might of itself be profitably the subject of a long essay; but I will end what I have room to say of it here, by citing from its pages a few of those deep generic passages which embody so much of truth and humanity in a few lines, — passages wrought on those luminous mental elevations to which the poet-thinker rises easily by virtue of the expansive power over thought of the sensibility to the beautiful. From these genial heights the vision descends upon a subject with psychic insights. A better illustration of the mastering ken thus gained could not be given than this first quotation, defining man: —

"In the midst stood Man,
Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,
As, of all visible natures, crown, though born
Of dust, and kindred to the worm; a Being,
Both in perception and discernment, first
In every capability of rapture,
Through the divine effect of power and love;
As, more than anything we know, instinct
With godhead, and, by reason and by will,
Acknowledging dependency sublime."

In Wordsworth's more rapt moods he is apt, all through "The Prelude," to appeal to his friend Coleridge, — to whom the poem is dedicated, — as he does in these lines, where modesty and self-confidence are intermingled: —

> "Dearest Friend!
> If thou partake the animated faith
> That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each
> Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
> Have each his own peculiar faculty,
> Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive
> Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame
> The humblest of this band who dares to hope
> That unto him hath also been vouchsafed
> An insight that in some sort he possesses
> A privilege whereby a work of his,
> Proceeding from a source of untaught things,
> Creative and enduring, may become
> A power like one of Nature's."

In the following he gives fresh poetic expression to truths known, he says, to Harmodius and Aristogiton and Brutus: —

> "That tyrannic power is weak,
> Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,
> Nor the support of good or evil men
> To trust in; that the godhead which is ours
> Can never utterly be charmed or stilled;
> That nothing has a natural right to last
> But equity and reason; that all else
> Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best
> Lives only by variety of disease."

Wordsworth and his friend Beaupuis, in their

talks on the Loire in 1792, had, one can readily believe, no subject more animating than the abuses and voluptuous life and immoralities of regal courts. But is there not an alarming likeness between the picture drawn in the following passage and the corruptions and perversions and meannesses of our own (not regal) but republican and democratic politics, and the men who rule them :—

"More delight
We took, and let this freely be confessed,
In painting to ourselves the miseries
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,
True personal dignity, abideth not;
A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off
From the natural inlets of just sentiment,
From lowly sympathy and chastening truth;
Where good and evil interchange their names,
And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
With vice at home."

Here is a brief but valuable sketch of himself in early manhood :—

"Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern
In temperament, withal a happy man,
And therefore bold to look on painful things,
Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold,
I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent
To anatomize the frame of social life,
Yea, the whole body of society
Searched to its heart."

One more extract I must make, it is so musical, so poetical, so thoughtful, so Wordsworthian: —

"Ye motions of delight that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach man's haughty race
How without injury to take, to give
Without offense; ye who, as if to show
The wondrous influence of power gently used,
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in silent night;
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of your shades,
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself,
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart;
Oh, that I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
What ye have done for me!"

XI.

JOHN WORDSWORTH.

SAINTE-BEUVE, when about to write a biography, would look, as keenly as opportunities would allow, into the characters and ruling tendencies of those nearest of kin to his subject, of father and mother, of sister and brother. Thus he got at the traits characteristic of the race, and was helped in the interpretation of the individual he wished to portray, especially in his obscurer or seemingly anomalous qualities. Had we no other means of judging of Dorothy Wordsworth but her Scottish Diary, that by itself would aid us in taking more closely into our minds the innate love of nature that showed itself, even in William's early boyhood. His younger brother John, too, had marked traits in common with him, the similarity becoming the more saliant from John's having had no literary culture, and being brought up to the sea. He attained early to the highest rank in the mercantile marine. With the poetic side of his

brother so strong was his sympathy, that in 1801, while critics, the willing and sincere mouthpieces of the shallow insusceptibility of the day, were sending forth an almost universal hiss of derision at the "Lyrical Ballads," John wrote to a friend: "The poems *will become* popular in time, but *by degrees.* The fact is, there are not a great many persons who will be pleased with them at first, but those that *are* pleased with them will be pleased *in a high degree*, and they will *be people of sense;* and this will have weight, and *then* people who neither understand, nor wish to understand them, will praise them."

Such was John's congeniality with William's high vocation, such his interest in his brother's labors, heightened by fraternal affection, that, being a bachelor, he persisted, after two unsuccessful voyages, made for the same purpose, in making a third, that he might earn the means of assisting his brother and sister. He sailed from Portsmouth in February, 1805, as commander of the *Abergavenny*, East Indiaman. Through the ignorance of the pilot the ship struck off Portland, and the captain and most of the crew and passengers were lost. The sad tidings Wordsworth announces to his friend Sir George Beaumont in these affecting words:—

"This calamitous news we received at two o'clock to-day, and I write to you from a house of mourning. My poor sister, and my wife who loved him almost as we did (for he was one of the most amiable of men), are in miserable affliction, which I do all in my power to alleviate; but Heaven knows I want consolation myself. I can say nothing higher of my ever dear brother than that he was worthy of his sister, who is now weeping beside me, and of the friendship of Coleridge; meek, affectionate, silently enthusiastic, loving all quiet things, and a poet in everything but words."

In the same excited, disconsolate tone, he continues and concludes the letter. He would not be comforted. Nine days later he resumes the subject in another long letter to Sir George, from which I make two short extracts: "Of all the human beings whom I ever knew, he was the man of the most rational desires, the most sedate habits, and the most perfect self-command. . . . . I shall never forget him, never lose sight of him: there is a bond between us yet, the same as if he were living, nay, far more sacred, calling upon me to do my utmost, as he to the last did his utmost, to live in honor and worthiness."

Again, three weeks later, in answer to a let

ter of heartfelt condolence from Sir George, he writes to him another long letter, at the conclusion of which he quotes a noble passage from Aristotle's "Synopsis of the Virtues and Vices." I will not refrain from giving the first part of this letter, long as it is, so finely Wordsworthian is it, and a page so profound and spiritual, that to have written it would have been an honor to Plato:—

"GRASMERE, *March* 12, 1805.

"As I have said, your last letter affected me much. A thousand times have I asked myself, as your tender sympathy led me to do, 'Why was he taken away?' and I have answered the question as you have done. In fact, there is no other answer which can satisfy and lay the mind at rest. Why have we a choice, and a will, and a notion of justice and injustice, enabling us to be moral agents? Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the supreme Governor? Why should our notions of right towards each other, and to all sentient beings within our influence, differ so widely from what appears to be his notion and rule, *if everything were to end here?* Would it not be blasphemy

to say that, upon the supposition of the thinking principle being *destroyed by death*, however inferior we may be to the great Cause and Ruler of things, we have *more of love* in our nature than He has? The thought is monstrous; and yet how to get rid of it, except upon the supposition of *another* and a *better world*, I do not see. As to my departed brother, who leads our minds at present to these reflections, he walked all his life pure among many impure. Except a little hastiness of temper, when anything was done in a clumsy or bungling manner, or when improperly contradicted upon occasions of not much importance, he had not one vice of his profession. I never heard an oath, or even an indelicate expression or allusion, from him in my life; his modesty was equal to that of the purest woman. In prudence, in meekness, in self-denial, in fortitude, in just desires and elegant and refined enjoyments, with an entire simplicity of manners, life, and habit, he was all that could be wished for in man: strong in health, and of a noble person, with every hope about him that could render life dear, thinking of, and living only for, others, — and we see what has been his end! So good must be better; so high must be destined to be higher."

Southey was a neighbor and friend whom Wordsworth loved and esteemed, although he could not greatly admire his poetry. To Southey he wrote, the day after the arrival of the sad tidings, in these grief-laden words: "If you could bear to come to this house of mourning to-morrow, I should be forever thankful. We weep much to-day, and that relieves us." He concludes as follows: —

"Oh! it makes the heart groan, that, with such a beautiful world as this to live in, and such a soul as that of man's is by nature and gift of God, that we should go about on such errands as we do, destroying and laying waste; and ninety-nine of us in a hundred never easy in any road that travels towards peace and quietness. And yet, what virtue and what goodness, what heroism and courage, what triumphs of disinterested love everywhere; and human life, after all, what it is! Surely, this is not to be forever, even on this perishable planet! Come to us to-morrow, if you can; your conversation, I know, will do me good."

Who was Sir George Beaumont? A baronet, a man of fortune, a landscape-painter of some distinction, a descendant of the celebrated Elizabethan dramatist, Francis Beaumont, a cultivated gentleman, who was among

the first to discover the genius of Wordsworth. In 1803, while lodging in the same house with Coleridge at Keswick, he made a present to Wordsworth of a small tract of land near Keswick, on which was a beautiful site for a house. This he did in order that Wordsworth might have the satisfaction of living near Coleridge. Wordsworth did not accept the gift, but an act so sympathetic and generous was the beginning of a friendship which near acquaintanceship knit into intimacy.

To Wordsworth the mechanical act of writing was always irksome, and so unwelcome the necessity of resorting to it, even to commit to paper the promptings of inspiration, that some of them were lost and many more would have been, if, as says his nephew and biographer, "Providence had not blessed him with a wife, a sister, a wife's sister, and a daughter, whose lives were bound up in his life, as his was in theirs, and who felt — what the world was slow in admitting — that his poems were destined for immortality, and that it was no small privilege to be instrumental in conveying them to posterity, it is probable that many of his verses, muttered by him on the roads, or on the hills, or on the terrace-walks of his own garden, would have been scattered to the winds, like

the plaintive accents of the deserted Ariadne on the coast of Naxos, —

"'Quæ cuncta aerii discerpunt irrita venti.'"

From some unaccountable morbid nervousness, at this particular period the holding of a pen was absolutely painful, so that he put off from week to week acknowledging the rare and most gratifying kindness of Sir George, making to him this apology: "I do not know from what cause it is, but during the last three years I have never had a pen in my hand for five minutes, before my whole frame becomes one bundle of uneasiness; a perspiration starts out all over me, and my chest is oppressed in a manner which I cannot describe. This is a sad weakness; for I am sure, though it is chiefly owing to the state of my body, that by exertion of mind I might in part control it. So, however, it is; and I mention it, because I am sure when you are made acquainted with the circumstances, though the extent to which it exists nobody can well conceive, you will look leniently upon my silence, and rather pity than blame me; though I must still continue to reproach myself, as I have done bitterly every day for these last eight weeks."

In a fine sonnet he thus refers to the gift: —

"Beaumont! it was thy wish that I should rear
A seemly cottage in this sunny dell,
On favored ground, thy gift, — where I might dwell
In neighborhood with one to me most dear;
That, undivided, we, from year to year,
Might work in our high calling."

In the beginning of 1806, after speaking, in a letter to Sir George, of the death of Nelson, he devotes a paragraph to Pitt, which seems to me to give a key to Pitt's whole political life, and to carry so sound a judgment as to deserve to be the final judgment of history: —

"Mr. Pitt is also gone! by tens of thousands looked upon in like manner as a great loss. For my own part, as probably you know, I have never been able to regard his political life with complacency. I believe him, however, to have been as disinterested a man, and as true a lover of his country, as it was possible for so ambitious a man to be. His *first* wish (though probably unknown to himself) was that his country should prosper *under his administration;* his *next*, that it should *prosper*. Could the *order* of these wishes have been *reversed*, Mr. Pitt would have avoided many of the grievous mistakes into which, I think, he fell. I know, my dear Sir George, you will give me credit for speaking without arrogance; and I am aware it is not unlikely you may differ

greatly from me in these points. But I like, in some things, to differ with a friend, and that he should *know* I differ from him; it seems to make a more healthy friendship, to act as a relief to those notions and feelings which we have in common, and to give them a grace and spirit which they could not otherwise possess."

In the autumn of this year, having just read in a newspaper that the death of Fox was hourly expected, Wordsworth wrote, during an evening walk after a stormy day, six short stanzas, of which these are the last two: —

"A Power is passing from the earth
To breathless Nature's dark abyss;
But when the great and good depart,
What is it more than this, —

"That Man, who is from God sent forth,
Doth yet again to God return?
Such ebb and flow must ever be,
Then wherefore should we mourn?"

Fox, Pitt, and Nelson died within a few months of each other; Nelson first, October 21, 1805. He is the basis of reality upon which Wordsworth built up his grand ideal of "The Happy Warrior," which might be called an ethical compendium for the conduct of life. As a poem it is profound, spiritual, and yet so intelligible and appreciable by all minds that it

should be printed in letters of gold as a supplement to the Ten Commandments, flaming before the reader the deepest law of conduct, the most solid conditions of human happiness, in a rhythmical form, so compact with noblest duty and lofty moral obligation that it might serve as a pillar of light, marshaling all aspiring men, as well as novices in life, the way they should go. As one of the choice products of human genius, which cannot be too often presented to view, I would strengthen and adorn my little volume by copying here the whole of it, were there not nearly one hundred lines. It would make, too, an appropriate ending to a chapter named after so noble a character as Captain John Wordsworth, in whom were found, says his brother, many elements portrayed in "The Happy Warrior." I must, however, give as a short sample, the opening lines: —

"Who is the Happy Warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be?
— It is the generous spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his childish thought:
Whose high endeavors are an inward light
That makes the path before him always bright:
Who with a natural instinct to discern
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn;
Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,
But makes his moral being his prime care."

XII.

POETS.

In the Preface to the second edition of the "Lyrical Ballads," — a long preface which, in aiming to vindicate the poems there printed against presumptuous and ignorant judgments, becomes a comprehensive and acute disquisition on poetry, — in this preface Wordsworth says, that what distinguishes these poems from the popular poems of the day is this: "The feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling."

When the poet of more ambition than inspiration sits down to write, it is to put into captivating verse a subject he has chosen, because, by its historic interest or its present vogue, or by the social elevation of its chief agents, or the exciting character of its incidents, it promises to be at once attractive. The poet of more inspiration than ambition does not choose his subject: his subject chooses him. His susceptibility being agitated by a warm breath in-

wardly breathed upon itself, or by some outward occasion, in harmony with its present mood, a form begins to crystallize, so alive with feeling that it takes tyrannous possession of him, holding at its beck all his best powers of plastic thought to round itself into concrete existence and proportion. Genuine poetry is thus always a creation; that is, the soul of the poet is generative enough to vitalize into a melodious visibility its own images, or to give new life to images supplied from without. Hence, in true poetry, — so true that it is to endure and endure ever fresh, — the feeling must give all the importance to any subject, whether the subject be Achilles or a daisy. Which is as much as to say: the fountain of poetry is the heart of the individual poet, whose æsthetic motions his art moulds into shapes, giving a body to what, but for his art, would be airy nothings. But if his heart (that is, his sensibility) is not deep and broad, and pure enough to furnish creative streams, fresh streams never seen before, and that, being nevertheless ambitious of poetic fame, he collects, through his art (that is, his intellect polished by some sense of the beautiful) and uses as material, not creations of his own brain, which has not quickening power to furnish them, but from the large common

property of accumulated floating poetic capital, or from the treasures stored in other poets, he draws his ideas as well as his forms, — in that case he writes from a reservoir, not from a fountain. And thence, however captivating for a time his art and fancy and knowledge may make his verse, its gloss soon wears off, and not having the sparkle imparted by strong inward soul-power, it loses after a while its look of life, and shows for what it is, not original, but derivative, poetry. In one of his letters, commenting upon the "White Doe of Rylstone," Wordsworth writes: "The poetry, if there be any in the work, proceeds, as it ought to do, from the soul of man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world." Full and pure and urgent must be the psychic fountain-head, if the streams thence proceeding are to be lively and lasting.

In another letter he writes: "There is scarcely one of my poems that does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiment, or to some general principle, or law of thought, or of our intellectual constitution." Observe that this is a totally different thing from writing a poem with the direct purpose of inculcating a moral. Wordsworth was too good an artist for that. Intimate with nature from hav-

ing such joy in her, and his mental organization being predominantly spiritual and moral, and noting the unity there is in all creation, he delights to fuse the affections of the mind with natural objects and appearances, and to body forth the union in poems remarkable for a grand simplicity of style and truth of sentiment. Wordsworth looked upon the vocation of the poet to be, to elevate and purify the mind. To a friend he writes: "You have given me praise for having reflected faithfully in my poems the feelings of human nature. But a great poet ought to do more than this; he ought, in a certain degree, to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent; in short, more consonant to nature, that is, to eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things. He ought to travel before men occasionally as well as at their sides." On another occasion he said: "Every great poet is a teacher: I wish either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing." And through the union in him of intellectual amplitude with depth and breadth and truth of feeling, and rare poetic gift, he is a teacher, a gracious, beneficent teacher. He rebathes the world of the English tongue in his own spirit,

invigorating it, elevating it, and educating it with a new lesson. And this is the exalted function of all great poets. How the glorious Greeks were freshened and strengthened by the Homeric songs, — a new thing under the sun! How the soul of Dante warmed and widened the soul of Italy! Who can compute the force that Shakespeare added to England? Who can weigh what he gives to all who speak the English tongue? Is not Germany another and a wiser Germany since Goethe?

So much has been said in these pages in commendation, just commendation, I trust, of Wordsworth, that he invites and can bear some disparagement. The mention of Goethe we make the occasion to pick a crow with him. He is unjust to Goethe. It may be doubted whether, during that very cold winter in Goslar, he mastered German sufficiently to enjoy Goethe's verse. We have seen that he was busy there upon reminiscences of "Lucy," and upon "Poets' Epitaphs," securing with his pen these and other treasures for posterity. He did not take to German modes of thought and life.

In the "Memoir" there is a chapter of reminiscences of conversations with Wordsworth, furnished chiefly by two cultivated neighbors, — Lady Richardson and Mrs. Davy. In an

out-of-door talk with Lady Richardson, August 26, 1841, he divides all eminent poets into two classes: those in whose poems the individual writer never appears, who breathe life into everything they touch, but never show themselves. These are the *universal* poets, first among whom he placed Homer and Shakespeare. In the second class he placed those whom you can trace individually in all they write, as in Milton and Spenser. To Goethe he refused a place in the first-class, and would not allow him a high place in the second; "so that," he concludes, "I consider him to be a very artificial writer, aiming to be universal, and yet constantly exposing his individuality, which his character was not of a kind to dignify. He had not sufficiently clear moral perceptions to make him anything but an artificial writer."

Is Goethe more transparent through "Faust" than Shakespeare is through "Hamlet?" What can you learn of the man Goethe in "Iphigenia" more than you can of the man Shakespeare in "The Tempest?" In "Hermann and Dorothea" is there not a Homeric objectivity? The Englishman of the seventeenth century is visible in "Julius Cæsar" and "Othello," as well as in "Henry V." and "King John;" and

in Goethe's poetic embodiments the German necessarily shines through. "Werther" and "Faust," and Goethe's ballads and lyrics, so musical and feeling-full, could not have been written anywhere but in Germany. Who can conceive of the "Divina Comedia" being produced out of Italy? Goethe an artificial writer! Goethe's conceptions — and therefore his sentences and pages — come from an intellect singularly complete in all compartments, steeped in rich sensibilities that were nourished by closest familiarity with nature, and with man as the highest in nature. A wider naturalist than Wordsworth was Goethe. Besides the poetic love for nature, which the two had in common, Goethe was a scientific lover of her charms and wonders. Such is not the soil that artificiality grows in. His style, in prose and verse, is noted for its directness and clearness and inartificiality. In style, Goethe and Wordsworth are both simple. In Goethe it is often a rich simplicity, in Wordsworth a grand; Goethe's simplicity is at times grand, Wordsworth's is never rich. In both the inward moulds the outward, the substance the form. You are not arrested by the words, by the dress; these are transparent, and let you at once see the fact or feeling.

The misjudgment on Goethe by Wordsworth was compounded from several ingredients. Insularity had something to do with it; fifty years ago, England's poets and scholars were much more insular than they are now. Some of it was traceable to Wordsworth's personal limitations (the largest and strongest and best have their limitations, even Shakespeare and Washington); some to the shadow wherewith orthodoxy is apt to darken the perception of its votaries, — a shadow which is not unfrequently deepened by that puritanic pharisaism chargeable upon Old England as well as New. It were not at all unlikely that the judgment conveyed in the last sentence of Wordsworth's quoted opinion had some influence in giving their tone to certain critiques on "Wilhelm Meister" that appeared in some of the leading British Reviews. These critics mistook the absence of a veil of conventionality for destruction of the guard of morality. Certain things and relations are spoken of more undisguisedly in this great fiction than is customary in England. Goethe uses this German freedom to give a fuller, richer picture of human nature and social motives and complications; but this freedom he does not abuse to excuse immorality. It is uncharitable as well

as insular and pharisaical to pass condemnatory sentence upon a neighboring people's customs and modes of feeling and thought, with which moral views are interwoven. When Murray, the London publisher, asked Lord Byron to write an account of the family life of the Italians, Byron refused for good personal reasons, and added: "You would not judge them rightfully in England; your moral is not their moral." On certain subjects the light from the central sun of Duty falls at somewhat different angles in Germany and England; and it is more self-righteous than safe for an Englishman to conclude that the beams from the controlling, fertilizing luminary strike with more vertical life upon him than upon the German.

Wordsworth has written effective poems on the betrayal of women by lovers, but not one of his is more effective, or, as poem, more simple than Goethe's "Faithless Boy;" nor is any one of Wordsworth's so rapid in its movement, so magnetic in its effect: still less is the moral in any of them impressed with such overpowering emphasis, with what might be called such a spiritual thunderclap, as in "The Faithless Boy." The first stanza Wordsworth would not have written, and would doubtless have condemned when he read it. In Goethe there was

a warmth of temperament foreign to the nature of Wordsworth; and to this warmth we owe the many charming, healthy, female creations in Goethe's poems and fictions, and in a measure the animating glow that pervades his pages. To the same warmth we owe the whole multitude of Shakespeare's lovely women, a resplendent creation, that helps to adorn and enliven and purify the world. In Wordsworth the poetic energy was not exerted in this direction, except to give an everlasting "Phantom of Delight," or other idealizations of reality like the "Sweet Highland Girl." In the eight thousand lines of "The Prelude" there is no woman, except the "Dame" with whom he lodged in his school-days, and a brief allusion to his sister, and a briefer to his future wife. There is no rich female figure held visionarily before his mind for a full portraiture. Nor is there any such in the "Excursion," a poem in which he aimed at giving readers his best, and which is even longer than "The Prelude." The female figures in "The Excursion" are fine sketches, subservient to a purpose. Now this is a want, æsthetically speaking,—a great want. Is not some of Wordsworth's unpopularity due to it? and possibly some of his lack of many-sidedness, and of general glow? The human

being loses by any truncation: as the revolving grindstone gives edge and brightness to the steel implement pressed upon it, the activity of the animal feelings, in their endless revolutions, give efficacy and lustre to the higher. Through his many-sidedness, and a strong interior propulsive power, the author of "Faust" belongs to Wordsworth's first class, the *universal poets*. Yet Wordsworth himself, it may be, performed the more successfully the noble task he set himself, through his very one-sidedness. A temperate man in all his habits, a man of healthy sensibilities, of clear, broad, cultivated intelligence, and warmed by that supreme glow which is ever hatching poetic imaginations, passes the best of his time in walking about a region remarkable, through lake, mountain, and valley, for natural beauty, murmuring as he goes melodious verse, which issues from a fountain of purest sympathies, that are fed by the ever-fresh sights and sounds of inexhaustible nature: such is Wordsworth, a man whose splendid faculties delight in the highest mental mood, — that of productive meditation.

A cultivated poet-thinker, Wordsworth was of course a superior critic of poetry. To be sure of this one has only to read his "Preface,"

and its "Supplement." Scattered through his letters and the reports of his conversation given in the "Memoir" are repeated evidences of his critical competency. On the occasion of Scott's undertaking, in 1805, an edition of Dryden, Wordsworth writes him a letter, beginning: "My dear Scott,—I was much pleased to hear of your engagement with Dryden; not that he is, as a poet, any great favorite of mine. I admire his talents and genius highly, but his is not a poetical genius."

The two printed pages which the letter fills scintillate with the insights of the poet-critic, who, by the way, affirms that "there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of Dryden's works." I cite the letter chiefly to note what he says of the character of language, reiterating the principle which lies at the bottom of his remarks on poetic language in the "Preface." The language of Dryden, says Wordsworth, "is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the intense passions." But is language in itself poetical or unpoetical? Could not two poets use the same vocabulary, say of a hundred words, to write each a short poem, the one impassioned

the other unimpassioned, the one poetical the other tame? To words, passion and poetry are imparted solely by their combination. The true poet combines words creatively, so that the reader is enlivened, is warmed by them: the artificial poet combines exactly the same words feebly, frostily. So of the artificial diction, called poetic diction, the artificiality is in the poet who misuses phrases and words, not in the words themselves. The very same words might be used by a strong, earnest writer to produce hearty effects. When Wordsworth thought he was making a revolution in poetic diction, was he not going deeper and making a revolution in poetic feeling and taste? With new currents of healthy sensibility he swept away the versified rubbish collected by unhealthy sensibility, which misused language, thus bringing words, honest in themselves, into discredit.

When Wordsworth writes the word *imagination* he means *poetic* imagination. Imagination, be it said, is not, as he terms it, a faculty, but the function of a faculty. When I recognize a friend who comes before me, I do so by virtue of one of the functions inherent in every intellectual faculty, that is, by *memory*. If I recall his image to my mind when he is gone, I exercise an intellectual function higher than

memory, and that is *imagination*. I call up his image to my mind. By means of imagination I hold in my mind the materials collected by memory. Thus, imagination is essential to the commonest daily processes of business. By means of it the mind grasps and handles its materials, just as the hand grasps and handles physical objects. To imagine is thus a purely intellectual operation.

But the intellect, immense, wonderful power as it is, is not, as a mental agency, so immense and wonderful as the feelings; these are the pith and marrow of man's life, the motive forces of conduct, and of these the intellect is but the instrument, the passive tool, — how effective a tool we learn when we see a man of strong intellect habitually acted on by strong, very selfish feelings. Now the feelings, thus using the intellect, when they are incited by one of the nobler, more expansive of themselves, the feeling for the beautiful, stimulate the intellect to a high tension in presenting, for their satisfaction, all kinds of images, combining and modifying them, at the bidding of the feelings, for various effects. Thence it has come that this action of the intellect, under pressure of the expansive, aspiring feeling for the beautiful, has got to be called *imagination*.

In this use of the term imagination is involved a psychological misconception; for to imagine is a purely intellectual process. The intellect being called upon for a vigorous and its most captivating performance of this process by the feelings, when themselves are swayed by the feeling for the beautiful, imagination has come to be used as synonymous almost with poetry. When meant to signify this elevated performance of its function, as it always is by Wordsworth, it should be called creative or poetic imagination.[1]

[1] See the author's volume, *Essays Æsthetical*: Essay, What is Poetry?

XIII.

SONNETS.

THE "Lyrical Ballads" were published in 1800. Since that, Wordsworth's reputation had been slowly growing. His admirers were not numerous, but they were a choice class, led by Coleridge, Sir George Beaumont, De Quincey, Wilson. Enemies of course he had. Success is a strong fertilizer, bringing up rapid crops of the weeds of envy and jealousy, particularly among clever, ambitious men of talent barren of genius. So that when in 1807 appeared two more volumes of "Poems by William Wordsworth," his former detractors, embittered by the vitality there was in this heterodox poet, indignant that he should presume to be alive after the stabs they had given him, assailed the new volumes with their old malignity envenomed by their failure. When we reflect that the new volumes contained "She was a Phantom of Delight," "The Happy Warrior," "The Seven Sisters," "Resolution and Independence;" some of his best Sonnets, including

those grand martial ones to Liberty, and other poems of the same stamp, we can perceive that in the first decade of the nineteenth century critics of poetry were not yet out of the slough of arrogant ignorance, and that their effrontery was equal to their blindness. And these critical sciolists were for years flattered by an appearance of success in their endeavors to crush Wordsworth; for the effect of their strictures so checked the sale of the volumes, that no new edition was called for from 1807, the year of their publication, to 1815.

Meanwhile the Poet was as firm and as confident in his belief in their durability as he was in that of the mountains that daily delighted his vision, and as calm, amid these blasts of injurious comment as one of his neighbor lakes, when in a sunny June morning it reflects the hills and the heavens in the smooth mirror of its deep waters. Among many letters from Wordsworth, given in the "Memoir," the most interesting, and one of the most valuable, morally and æsthetically, ever written by a great poet, is a letter to Lady Beaumont, dated May 21, 1807. Lady Beaumont, one of his warmest friends and admirers, having, among the earliest, already read them, writes to him to express her interest in them, and her solicitude

as to their reception by the public. Wordsworth opens his answer with cordial thanks, begging her not to have any anxiety about the opposition the poems may excite, and then continues:—

"It is impossible that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. I do not here take into consideration the envy and malevolence, and all the bad passions which always stand in the way of a work of any merit from a living poet; but merely think of the pure, absolute, honest ignorance in which all worldlings of every rank and situation must be enveloped, with respect to the thoughts, feelings, and images, on which the life of my poems depends. The things which I have taken, whether from within or without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from door to door, from street to street, on foot or in carriage; with Mr. Pitt or Mr. Fox, Mr. Paul or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster election or the borough of Honiton? In a word, — for I cannot stop to make my way through the hurry of images that present themselves to me, — what have they to do with endless talking about things nobody cares anything for, except as far as their own

vanity is concerned; and this with persons they care nothing for but as their vanity or *selfishness* is concerned? What have they to do (to say all at once) with a life without love? In such a life there can be no thought; for we have no thought (save thoughts of pain) but as far as we have love and admiration.

"It is an awful truth that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world, — among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.

"Upon this I shall insist elsewhere; at present let me confine myself to my object, which is to make you, my dear friend, as easy-hearted as myself with respect to these poems. Trouble not yourself upon their present reception; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny? to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel,

and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves."

I give the most striking part of this long letter. It presents prominently to view the self-confidence of Wordsworth, which, in a man of so much worth, and a poet of so much power, shines here as a virtue, enabling him to bear and defy neglect and scoffs, and to walk right on in the upward path he had deliberately entered.

The Rev. F. W. Robertson, of Brighton, England, that spiritually-gifted preacher and sound thinker, in an admirable lecture on Wordsworth, in 1853, declares wisely that the first qualification for appreciating poetry is unworldliness; and then thus defines worldliness: "By worldliness I mean entanglement in the temporal and visible. It is the spirit of worldliness which makes a man love show, splendor, rank, title, and sensual enjoyments; and occupies his attention, chiefly or entirely, with conversation respecting merely passing events, and passing acquaintances."

The poet being the cordial mouth-piece of the most momentous, the finest, the truest

truth, *truth of feeling*, any spuriousness or pretense is like a false note in music, and, while marring the rhythm of the poem, it jars the soul of the poet. And therefore to him is especially offensive and disheartening the artificiality, the hollowness, the shallow pretension, the hypocrisy, of worldly society, with its deceptive varnish, its materialism, its impossibility of attaining to any beauty of proportions. To a poet of the reach and earnestness and spirituality of Wordsworth, this most unpoetic side of humanity, which is always presented by fashionable circles, would at all times be discouraging enough to untune him for any higher effort than indignant denunciation; and so, at the opening of the century, when the political existence of England was threatened by Bonaparte, and he, Wordsworth, was, out of the depths of his English heart, pouring forth noble sonnets to liberty, this worldly side of human nature, so grossly and unblushingly displayed, drove him almost to hopelessness. The following lines, which make the larger half of a sonnet addressed to Coleridge in 1802, give rhythmical utterance to this feeling:—

"Oh, friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest
To think that now our life is only drest
For show; mean handwork of craftsman, cook,

Or groom! We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest;
The wealthiest man among us is the best:
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us."

Wordsworth was an active patriot; and he was a genuine, not a demagogic patriot: he was not a flatterer of England, of her government or people. When the news reached England, in 1808, of the Convention of Cintra, whereby a defeated French army, under Junot, was allowed to return to France, there arose among many of the sturdiest Englishmen a cry of wrath and shame. Wordsworth issued a pamphlet, which Canning pronounced the most eloquent political production since Burke; and Charles Lamb, in a letter to Coleridge, says of it: "Its power over me was like that which Milton's pamphlets must have had over his contemporaries who were turned to them. What a piece of prose!"

To know how warm and sound a patriot Wordsworth was, one should read the Sonnets to Liberty. They are in two parts, the first embracing those written between 1802 and 1806, twenty-six in number. Take this as a sample of their quality: —

"Milton! thou should be living at this hour;
England hath need of thee: she is a fen

Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, th' heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh, raise us up, return to us again!
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

Between the two parts of the Sonnets comes an ode, written in 1807, when Napoleon was at the height of Imperial power. This ode is a picture, as graphic as eloquent, of the blasting rule of Napoleon on the Continent. The first strophe ends:—

"Melt, Principalities, before her melt!
Her love ye hailed — her wrath have felt!
But she through many a change of form hath gone,
And stands amidst you now an armèd creature,
Whose panoply is not a thing put on,
But the live scales of a portentous nature;
That, having wrought its way from birth to birth,
Stalks round — abhorred by Heaven, a terror to the Earth!"

The second part contains forty sonnets. The fourth of these, written in 1807, opens with this prophecy, —

"High deeds, O Germans, are to come from you!" —

a prophecy grandly fulfilled six years later. Many relate to the conflict in Spain, several to the Tyrolese and their brave fight. One opens with this clear definition of Honor: —

> "Say, what is Honor? 'T is the finest sense
> Of *justice* which the human mind can frame,
> Intent on each lurking frailty to disclaim,
> And guard the way of life from all offense
> Suffered or done."

The number, excellence, and variety of Wordsworth's Sonnets give him a claim to be called the chief of sonneteers. For him the sonnet is not, as it is for almost all English poets who have written it, a short poem interjected, as it were, among longer poems, in momentary moods, when a single idea or person or sentiment appeals to the poet for brief concentrated expression. Besides hundreds, originated in this way, he has taken the sonnet as a form of stanza to embody long poems. Thus, in a series of one hundred and eighteen, in three parts, entitled "Ecclesiastical Sonnets," he delivers a poet's commentary on the history and vicissitudes of the Church of England from the days of the Druids to modern times. Here is a poem of more than sixteen hundred lines, on a wide, deep, various, national subject, offering rich opportunities to a poet whose mind,

like Wordsworth's, through fineness and fullness of organization, gets intuitive insights which make of it a kind of magic mirror wherein others can behold reflected much of divine truth and law. Intuitions into the feelings and aspirations of the human heart are a different domain from that of opinions upon institutions and humanly established forms. In the same sonnet sometimes the reader may feel himself attracted and warmed by the sentiment, and repelled by the opinion. Many of Wordsworth's admirers will be unwilling to subscribe to the Sonnet on Laud, but few will refuse to him full sympathy with the following, which illustrates the suppression of the Monasteries:—

"The lovely nun (submissive, but more meek
Through saintly habit than from effort due
To unrelenting mandates that pursue
With equal wrath the steps of strong and weak)
Goes forth, — unveiling timidly a cheek
Suffused with blushes of celestial hue,
While through the convent's gate to open view
Softly she glides, another home to seek.
Not Iris, issuing from her cloudy shrine,
An apparition more divinely bright!
Not more attractive to the dazzled sight
Those watery glories, on the stormy brine
Pour'd forth, while summer suns at distance shine,
And the green vales lie hush'd in sober light!"

The latter half of the one-headed "Wiccliffe" does what deep thinkers, especially great poets, are apt to do unconsciously: it sets forth through an individual illustration a generic principle or universal truth. The lines describe the spread of truth in all cases where are involved the broad interests of humanity. The remains of Wickliffe being by the opponents of his reformatory spirit exhumed and the ashes flung into the nearest brook, the "voice that walks upon the winds, though seldom heard by busy human kind," thus speaks: —

"As thou these ashes, little brook! wilt bear
Into the Avon, Avon to the tide
Of Severn, Severn to the narrow seas,
Into main Ocean they, this deed accurst
An emblem yields to friends and enemies
How the bold Teacher's doctrine, sanctified
By truth, shall spread, throughout the world dispersed."

With all the proper deference to Wordsworth and other churchmen, it may be said that a fallacy runs through the Ecclesiastical Sonnets. Wordsworth assumes that the Church of England is a heavenly institution, — an institution especially founded and favored by God. Such a position is, must be by the constitution of the human mind, pure assumption, its only basis, human imagination heated by pride. In church matters, more than in others, there is, even

among men of culture, a dangerous confounding of conscience and conceit, of piety and egotism. All institutions on earth are necessarily human. Religious institutions can only be the outcome of individual inward religious movement and aspiration, modified by historical, social, personal circumstances. Creeds and rituals are as much the work of human minds as cathedrals are of human hands. How much divinity there is behind, moving the minds or the hands, will be transparent in the excellence realized: in the one case realized in the beauty of goodness, in justice, humility, charity to all men, not self-assertion; in the other, in grace of form and buoyancy of proportion.

When Wordsworth was a republican, and when, as in the first Scotch tour with his sister, he had no scruples about traveling on Sunday, he was more spiritual than when he became a monarchist and a staunch upholder of the establishment, whether in church or aristocracy. As he grew old, the material usurped upon the spiritual, and thence his mental vision became a little clouded, and in ecclesiastical matters particularly, his natural arrogance made itself felt. Not to blame Wordsworth, still less to throw a shadow upon his sacred memory, are these comments ven-

tured, but purely for the purpose of endeavoring to get a clear view of him as he was. For myself, I would not have him other than he was by a tittle. He was a man to admire, to rejoice in, to revere, a good man and a great man, standing in the splendid hierarchy of English poets next to Milton, possibly by his side.

Using the sonnet as a form of stanza (a most difficult one), Wordsworth wrote another poem addressed to the river Duddon, a beautiful river that takes its rise in the mountains of Cumberland, a stream, every foot of which Wordsworth knew from his boyhood. The poem consists of thirty-four sonnets, the second of which begins, "Child of the Clouds!" Wordsworth's faculty, a poetic faculty, of putting a scene vividly before you with a pen (so often attempted, so seldom achieved) is well illustrated in the first eight lines of the fourth: —

> "Take, cradled nursling of the mountains, take
> This parting glance, no negligent adieu!
> A Protean change seems wrought while I pursue
> The curves, a loosely-scattered chain doth make;
> Or rather thou appear'st a glistening snake,
> Silent, and to the gazer's eye untrue,
> Thridding with sinuous lapse the rushes through
> Dwarf willows gliding, and by ferny brake."

He wrote another — poem can it be called, because it has put on the dress of poetry?

Should that be called a poem which was written in advocacy of the death-penalty, and presents solemnly and sincerely what a poet-thinker can say on so dismal a theme, which, if it lift itself up at all, must rise on the raven's wing? What a sustained illusion that could carry a poet through fourteen sonnet-stanzas of which the hangman is the hero! That a kind and thoughtful Englishman should, forty years ago, be opposed to the abrogation of the death penalty, one can readily understand. But that a high, sympathetic poet should, even in advanced age, on such a theme, attempt to make a series of sonnets flow musically with an uplifting movement, proves that Wordsworth's was not of the minds (there are few such) that grow more sane, more spiritual, more deeply intuitive, when years begin to lay weights on the body.

Wordsworth's finest sonnets were written in earlier years. The self-involved movement, as in an eddy, of the sonnet suited his meditative mind. The sonnet grows rapidly from within to its modest compass; but, though bounded, it should be strong with interior motion, and, like a spring, be clear and deep in proportion to the smallness of its surface. Wordsworth's best are dyed in the glow of his deep moral

nature. Here is one of the most thoughtful, and at the same time most sonorous: —

"The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The Winds that will be howling at all hours
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

Both by their quality and their quantity, his sonnets form an important part of Wordsworth's poetic work; they fill between seven and eight thousand lines of his best verse. Professor Wilson (Christopher North) said of them: "Wordsworth's sonnets, were they all in one book, would be the statesman's, warrior's, priest's, sage's manual." On this account I have lingered with them so long, and now conclude with this Sonnet on the Sonnet: —

"Scorn not the Sonnet: Critic, you have frowned,
Mindless of its just honors; with this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;

With it Camoens soothed an exile's grief;
The sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,
It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faery-land
To struggle through dark ways; and when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
Soul-animating strains — alas, too few!"

XIV.

THE WHITE DOE OF RYLSTONE.

THE revolution in poetic subjects and treatment, which Wordsworth undertook to make, and in essential principles did make, is by nothing he accomplished more strongly exemplified than by "The White Doe of Rylstone." The hint for this tragic tale he took from the ballad of "The Rising in the North," first published in 1765, in "Percy's Reliques," a collection which preceded Wordsworth in the good work of bringing poetry back to nature and simplicity. Wordsworth's own words shall tell what he aimed to do in this remarkable poem, remarkable for its beauty and power, and thence for the attainment of his high æsthetic aim: —

"Let me here say a few words of this poem, by way of criticism. The subject being taken from feudal times, has led to its being compared to some of Walter Scott's poems that belong to the same age and state of society. The comparison is inconsiderate. Sir Walter

pursued the customary and very natural course of conducting an action, presenting various turns of fortune, to some outstanding point on which the mind might rest as a termination or catastrophe. The course I attempted to pursue is entirely different. Everything that is attempted by the principal personages in the 'White Doe' *fails*, so far as its object is external and substantial: so far as it is moral and spiritual, it *succeeds*. The heroine of the poem knows that her duty is not to interfere with the current of events, either to forward or delay them; but —

> 'To abide
> The shock, and finally secure
> O'er pain and grief a triumph pure.'"

Not less original than the conception of the "White Doe of Rylstone" was the manner and place of its production. Wordsworth and his wife were on a visit to her brother, Mr. Hutchinson, at Sockburn-on-Tees, at the close of 1807. These are his words: "The country is flat, and the weather was rough. I was accustomed every day to walk to and fro under the shelter of a row of stacks in a field at a small distance from the town, and there poured forth my verses aloud as freely as they would come."

In the onward, bodeful flow of its narrative;

in the natural ease and beauty of the pictures revealed by the devious current; in the conflicts of feeling which the progress of the story evolves, this tale is not surpassed by the narrations of Byron or Scott; while its incidents move to the beat of a higher music, in which, if there is less superficial clang than in theirs, there is a deeper rhythm, which lingers longer on the chords of the reader's heart. No wonder that when the manuscript was shown to Southey he wrote to Scott: "The story affected me more deeply than I wish to be affected, and nothing was ever more ably treated."

In this, as in all other of Wordsworth's best poems, there are — what are only found in poets in whom work freely together deep thoughtfulness and clean truth of feeling, and what may be called, as himself calls them, recesses — significant side retreats, into which you pass to get unexpected glimpses and revelations. Nowhere — and indeed nowhere on any of Wordsworth's pages — is there a line or sentence written merely for outward effect; no intellectual, ostentatious gymnastics, no showy fancy work to intercept, with flickering light and shade, the direct beams of feeling.

What shall I say of the figure of the "White Doe," a creature akin to those marvels of po-

etic life, "Mignon and Ariel," — a figure drawn by a high visionariness out of the deeps which warmest intimacy with nature empowers the poet to penetrate. She is a silver link between earth and heaven, a bond that binds together the worlds of flesh and spirit. With a benign influence she chastens the tragic passion of the poem.

About the years 1814–16 Wordsworth, being busied preparing his son for Cambridge, was led into a renewal of acquaintance with the ancient classics. As fruit of this intimacy was a translation of several books of the Æneid, speaking of which in a letter to his friend and neighbor, the Earl of Lonsdale, he says he is persuaded that Milton formed his blank verse upon the model of the Georgics and Æneid of Virgil. But for us more precious fruit of the resteeping of his mind in ancient poetry are "Dion" and "Laodamia," poems which illustrate what may be called a characteristic of Wordsworth, even among poets, that there always floated above him an insatiable ideal, ever drawing his thoughts and aims towards the sublime peaks of perfection. This determination upward springs out of the very being of poetry. This passion for the better polishes the poet's thoughts and diction, and, when as-

sociated, as in Wordsworth, with energy in the spiritual and moral sensibilities, swings him up to the high ethic table-land whence flow th clear, invigorating streams of duty and benef cence. This moral ideal dictates the conclud ing lines of "Dion": —

> "Him only pleasure leads, and peace attends,
> Him, only him, the shield of Jove defends,
> Whose means are fair and spotless as his ends."

And this stanza of Laodamia: —

> "Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend —
> Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
> Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
> For this the passion to excess was driven —
> That self might be annulled: her bondage prove
> The fetters of a dream, opposed to love."

Thus, dealing with the feelings of man in their deepest movement and finest play, the poet becomes, through his ideal tendency, the educator of humanity. Still, his function on this high plain is indirect. A ruling principle it is, that the effect of Art in all its forms is not to communicate facts, or directly to teach a moral lesson: it is to elevate, to illuminate the reader's or spectator's or auditor's mood, to tune his feelings to a higher key, to exalt him, not to amuse, or even to instruct him; it is to put him into a frame of mind in which he

shall be more susceptible to good influences, more capable to do any good work his mind is upon; in a word, to animate and purify him through the beautiful. The true artist is always the earnest, happy servant of the beautiful.

Wordsworth enjoyed traveling. So regardful was Sir George Beaumont (whom he lost in 1827) of the poet's known delight in excursions, that this kind friend left him, by will, an annuity of one hundred pounds, specifically to give him the enjoyment of an annual tour. From Homer to Wordsworth, roaming has been a happy propensity of poets, whereby they enrich their susceptive minds with new thoughts and new images, and freshen and deepen their feelings. In 1820, in company with Mrs. Wordsworth, her sister, and two or three friends, he made a tour that is now annually made, in one third the time it then took him and his party, by thousands of English and American travelers, through Brussels, Namur (my own chief interest in once visiting Namur was to behold the fortress at whose siege My Uncle Toby got his wound), down the Meuse, through Liege and Aix-la-Chapelle, to Cologne; up the Rhine, through Mayence and Frankfort, to Heidelberg; thence through the Black Forest to Schaff-

hausen; thence through some of the choice regions of Switzerland, where, high up on the Wengern Alp, they enjoyed the awe of an avalanche. From Geneva they passed over the Simplon down into the plains of Italy to Milan; thence by the lakes of Como and Lugano back to Geneva; whence, through Dijon and Fontainebleau, to Paris. Wordsworth had not been in Paris since 1792. Nothing in Paris now interested him so much as the *Jardin des Plantes*, with its live animals and Museum of Natural History. "Scarcely could I refrain," he writes to the Earl of Lonsdale, "from tears of admiration at the sight of this apparently boundless exhibition of wonders of the creation. The statues and pictures of the Louvre affect me feebly in comparison."

In the summer of 1823, accompanied by Mrs. Wordsworth, he made another shorter tour through Belgium and Holland. In Antwerp, he wrote: "We feasted our eyes upon those magnificent pictures of Rubens, in the Cathedral, over and over again." A pity it is that he did not extend his journey into Germany as far as Weimar. Goethe was twenty years older than Wordsworth, and he, too, had been stiffened by age into Toryism. As artists and lovers of nature, they would have enjoyed

each other, and the English poet would have brought away a more just opinion of the great German than that given in the last chapter.

So long as his legs would carry him, Wordsworth never tired of rambling; and to this I owe the satisfaction of having again shaken hands with him at Malvern in 1849, when, in his eightieth year (the year before his death), he walked over the Malvern hills from the northern side, where he lodged, into the village of Malvern on the southern side. He was strolling with one of the physicians of Malvern. I recalled to his mind a visit I paid him at Rydal in 1840, but I doubt whether he remembered me. We were standing in the center of the village, and I shall never forget his somewhat drooping figure and look. A butcher's shop was opposite to us, and on the doctor's commenting upon the freshened look of his premises, Wordsworth remarked, with a slight tincture of satire in his voice and manner, "The butcher seems to be doing well."

In 1829 he went on an excursion in Ireland with a gentleman who traveled post with four horses. As an illustration of the poetic impulse to make things better, Wordsworth, finding the guide-books such "sorry things," would have liked to get up a good one himself. To a

correspondent he writes: "If I were a younger man, and could prevail on an able artist to accompany me, there are few things I should like better than giving a month or six weeks to explore the county of Kerry only." His "Guide to the Lakes" bears witness to his peculiar competency to execute such a volume. The tour in Ireland, like that up the Rhine the year before, was barren of poetic fruit. Only in Ireland was seen the eagle that soars in that great poem on the "Power of Sound," a poem of fourteen stanzas, of sixteen lines each, itself an immortality. This is its twelfth stanza:—

"By one pervading spirit
Of tones and numbers all things are controlled,
As sages taught, where faith was found to merit
Initiation to that mystery of old.
The Heavens, whose aspect makes our minds as still
As they themselves *appear* to be,
Innumerable voices fill
With everlasting harmony;
The towering headlands, crowned with mist,
Their feet among the billows, know
That Ocean is a mighty harmonist;
Thy pinions, universal Air,
Ever waving to and fro,
Are delegates of harmony, and bear
Strains that support the seasons in their round;
Stern Winter loves a dirge-like sound."

One of the longest chapters in the "Memoirs" is given to Wordsworth's letters to va-

rious correspondents on education, and an address he delivered, by request of the aged founder of a school at Bowness on lake Windermere. The chapter shows how intimate was his knowledge of this high subject, and how eager always his wish to improve whatever he took an interest in; and he took an interest in whatever bore upon the general welfare of his country or humanity.

Here is a very biographical passage from a letter dated February 19, 1819, to one of his earliest and dearest friends, who was now Archdeacon Wrangham:—

"You astonish me with the account of your books; and I should have been still more astonished if you had told me you had read a third (shall I say a tenth part?) of them. My reading powers were never very good, and now they are much diminished, especially by candlelight; and as to *buying* books, I can affirm that in *new* books I have not spent five shillings for the last five years, *i. e.* in reviews, magazines, pamphlets, etc., etc.; so that there would be an end of Mr. Longman, and Mr. Cadell, etc., etc., if nobody had more power or inclination to buy than myself. And as to old books, my dealings in that way, for want of means, have been very trifling. Nevertheless, small and

paltry as my collection is, I have not read a fifth part of it. I should, however, like to see your army.

> 'Such forces met not, nor so wide a camp,
> When Agrican, with all his *northern* powers,
> Besieged Albracca, as *romances* tell.'

Not that I accuse you of romancing; I verily believe that you have all the books you speak of. Dear Wrangham, are you and I ever like to meet in this world again? *Yours* is a *corner* of the earth; *mine* is *not* so. I never heard of anybody going to Bridlington; but all the world comes to the Lakes. Farewell. Excuse this wretched scrawl; it is like all that proceeds from my miserable pen."

Mr. Moxon, the publisher, who afterwards became his publisher, and who had some poetic talent, sent him, in 1826, a small volume of his attempts. Wordsworth, in acknowledging the volume, which, he writes, "I have read with no inconsiderable pleasure," gives the young aspirant the following good advice: "This little volume, with what I saw of yourself during a short interview, interests me in your welfare; and the more so, as I always feel some apprehension for the destiny of those who in youth addict themselves to the composition of verse. It is a very seducing employment, and though

begun in disinterested love of the Muses, is too apt to connect itself with self-love, and the disquieting passions which follow in the train of that our natural infirmity. Fix your eye upon acquiring independence by honorable business, and let the Muses come after rather than go before."

From Wordsworth's letters may be picked gems of criticism. In 1829, he writes to Professor Hamilton, of Dublin, to thank him for verses from himself and sister: "Your sister's have abundance of spirit and feeling; all that they want is what appears in itself of little moment, and yet is of incalculably great, — that is, workmanship, — the art by which the thoughts are made to melt into each other, and to fall into light and shadow, regulated by distinct preconception of the best general effect they are capable of producing."

In the same year he was tempted to become a contributor to one of the "Annuals," the editor of which, he writes, treated him shamefully, and he then adds: "I am properly served for having had any connection with such things. My only excuse is, that they offered me a very liberal sum, and that I have labored hard through a long life, without more pecuniary emolument than a lawyer gets for two special

retainers, or a public performer sometimes for two or three songs."

To the same friend to whom the above was sent, Mr. G. Huntly Gordon, he writes in 1830: "You ask what are my employments. According to Dr. Johnson they are such as entitle me to a high commendation, for I am not only making two blades of grass grow where only one grew before, but a dozen. In plain language, I am draining a bit of spongy ground. In the field where this goes on, I am making a green terrace that commands a beautiful view of our two lakes, Rydal and Windermere, and more than two miles of intervening vale with the stream visible by glimpses flowing through it."

My most precious memory of England, through several visits at different periods, is walking, on Thursday noon, the 30th of July, 1840, on that terrace beside the builder of it. It should be added, that even more precious than the memory of that beautiful landscape, sanctified by the presence of Wordsworth as hospitable interpreter, are the memories of his kindness in-doors on the same morning, and on the second day, when we took tea with him, and walked with him before tea, to look at Rydal Fall, and on the fourth day (Sunday), when

we sat with him in his pew in the little chapel near his house.[1]

In the autumn of 1831 Wordsworth and his daughter set off from Rydal to visit Sir Walter Scott before his departure for Italy, whither he was going in the hope of restoring his shattered health. On this occasion Wordsworth wrote a sonnet, which expresses in his clear, clinging diction, set to a poetic key, his own sympathy with Sir Walter, mingled with sounding utterance of public admiration and interest. The sonnet begins:—

> "A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain,
> Nor of the setting sun's pathetic light
> Engendered, hangs o'er Eildon's triple height;"

and ends:—

> "Be true,
> Ye winds of ocean, and the midland sea,
> Wafting your charge to soft Parthenope!"

The taking leave of Sir Walter is thus described: "At noon, on Thursday, we left Abbotsford, and on the morning of that day, Sir Walter and I had a serious conversation, *tête-à-tête*, when he spoke with gratitude of the happy life which, upon the whole, he had led. He had written in my daughter's album, before he

[1] See "*Scenes and Thoughts in Europe.*" First Series, Chapter I.

came into the breakfast-room that morning, a few stanzas addressed to her; and while putting the book into her hand, in his own study, standing by his desk, he said to her in my presence: "I should not have done anything of this kind but for your father's sake; they are probably the last verses I shall ever write."

The scenery in Scotland was ever an attraction to Wordsworth. In the summer of 1833, accompanied by his son, the Rev. John Wordsworth, rector of Brigham, near Cockermouth, and by Henry Crabb Robinson, he made another sally into Scotland, going by the Isle of Man. Wordsworth, long after reaching manhood, had seen the rise of the steamboat,— that huge shuttle that now plies backward and forward all over the earth, where there is deep water, to weave the woof of civilization, — that winged giant who carries on his broad back thousands, where, before his advent, only tens could go.

Wordsworth has been charged with a conservatism so unreasoning as to be angered by the approach of the railroad towards his beloved lakes. A poet may be pardoned some irritability at the imagination of the monstrous scars cut upon the beautiful face of the rare nature about him by the engineer's pick. But that

Wordsworth was neither unreasoning nor obtuse to the vast beneficent conquests made by the scientific art of man, is proved by a fine sonnet (part of the fruit of this tour) called "Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways," which ends:—

> "In spite of all that beauty may disown
> In your harsh features, Nature doth embrace
> Her lawful offspring in Man's art; and Time,
> Pleased with your triumphs o'er his brother Space,
> Accepts from your bold hands the proffered crown
> Of hope, and smiles on you with cheer sublime."

A remark he makes about children is worth recording, coming from so sure and subtle an observer. Some readers will think there is in the remark more of imagination than of fact. In the Isle of Man he fell in with a party of little children, one of whom, "upon my request, recited the Lord's Prayer to me, and I helped her to a clearer understanding of it as well as I could; but I was not at all satisfied with my own part,—hers was much better done; and I am persuaded that, like other children, she knew more about it than she was able to express, especially to a stranger."

His admiration of Burns, and his sympathy with him, find frequent utterance. When Mosgiel was pointed out to him, he expresses surprise that the splendid prospect stretching to-

wards the sea was never adverted to by Burns, though daily in his sight; and he adds: "Yet this is easily explained. In one of his poetical effusions he speaks of describing 'fair Nature's face,' as a privilege on which he sets a high value; nevertheless, natural appearances rarely take a lead in his poetry. It is as a human being, eminently sensitive and intelligent, and not as a poet clad in his priestly robes, and carrying the ensigns of sacerdotal office, that he interests and affects us.

"Whether he speaks of river, hills, and woods, it is not so much on account of the properties with which they are absolutely endowed, as relatively to local patriotic remembrances and associations, or as they are ministerial to personal feelings, especially those of love, whether happy or otherwise; yet it is not *always* so."

XV.

POLITICS.

WORDSWORTH never recovered from the deep disappointment of what seemed to him a gross and permanent failure in the promises of the French Revolution, whose first imposing movement was coincident in time with his entrance into manhood, — he being an eye-witness in France and Paris to the tremendous upheaval. Shocked in his feelings and shaken in his hopes by the Reign of Terror, with its iniquities, he was confounded by the usurpation of Bonaparte, with its deeper, broader iniquities. Believing, with something like the confidence of Bossuet, that he could trace the design of God in history, his vision was not enough clarified and strengthened by love and hope to compass the wider sweeps of Providential rule, but found itself balked by apparently destructive phenomena, not discerning that these were temporary and preparatory. In his faith he was not passive enough, but too self-asserting, and thence he misinterpreted Providence, in at-

tempting to weigh the Infinite in finite scales. Wordsworth did not expand after middle life; as he advanced towards age he became more and more Tory, and thus more alarmed by political change; for the essence of Toryism is unpliableness and immobility, whereas the profound characteristic of providential control is unceasing flux, perpetual change, uninterrupted progression.

When the agitation about the Reform Bill began in England, in 1831, Wordsworth was in his sixty-second year. For several years after the bloodless deposition of the elder Bourbons in 1830, he was kept uncomfortable, fearing revolutionary, disastrous measures in England. As he expressed it in verse:—

> "Every day brought with it tidings new,
> Of rash change, ominous for the public weal."

Remembering his powerful pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra, his Tory friends appealed to him to champion the good cause with his prose pen. To one of these friends he writes, in December, 1831, a letter, from which I extract below two passages biographically valuable. Wordsworth never desisted from endeavoring to improve his verse. As studiously and patiently as Virgil, did he weigh and reweigh his words, as well for their prosody as their

meaning, continuing to revise his poems till his death. The letter of his friend had been delayed. To this the opening words of the first passage refer: "When it reached me I was engaged in assisting my wife to decipher some of my mangled and almost illegible MSS., which inevitably involved me in endeavors to correct and improve them. My eyes are subject to frequent inflammations, of which I had an attack (and am still suffering from it) while that was going on."

The second passage is as follows: "A conviction of my incompetence to do justice to the momentous subject has kept me, and I fear will keep me, silent. My sixty-second year will soon be completed, and though I have been favored thus far in health and strength beyond most men of my age, yet I feel its effects upon my spirits; they sink under a pressure of apprehension to which, at an early period of my life, they would probably have been superior. There is yet another obstacle: I am no ready master of prose writing, having been little practiced in the art. This last consideration will not weigh with you; nor would it have done with myself a few years ago; but the bare mention of it will serve to show that years have deprived me of *courage*, in the sense

the word bears when applied by Chaucer to the animation of birds in spring time."

From a letter to another correspondent I take this very striking sentence: "The constitution of England, which seems about to be destroyed, offers to my mind the sublimest contemplation which the history of society and government have ever presented to it; and for this cause especially, that its principles have the character of preconceived ideas, archetypes of the pure intellect, while they are, in fact, the results of a humble-minded experience."

In 1832 he concludes a long letter to the Earl of Lonsdale with these words,— words so fraught with deep practical wisdom that they deserve to be inscribed in all legislative halls, national or municipal, of every country in Christendom; displayed in large golden letters, right over the presiding officer's chair, where every mover of a measure could read them: —

"It has ever been the habit of my mind to trust that expediency will come out of fidelity to principles, rather than to seek my principles of action in calculations of expediency."

Readers who have not forgotten the wise, unselfish, sprightly Dorothy will like to hear of her once more. For the latter portion of her long life (she outlived her brother William) she

was an invalid. In 1832 Wordsworth writes of her to their brother, the Rev. Dr. Wordsworth: "Our dear sister makes no progress towards recovery of strength. She is very feeble, never quits her room, and passes most of the day in, or upon, the bed. She does not suffer much pain, and is very cheerful, and nothing troubles her but public affairs and the sense of requiring so much attention. Whatever may be the close of this illness, it will be a profound consolation to you, my dear brother, and to us all, that it is borne with perfect resignation; and that her thoughts are such as the good and pious would wish. She reads much, both religious and miscellaneous works."

He thus concludes the letter: "John says you are well; so am I, and every one here except our sister: but I have witnessed one revolution in a foreign country, and I have not courage to think of facing another in my own. Farewell. God bless you again."

At this period the letters of Wordsworth pulsate more sensitively than usual with the troubles of his heart. As though his feelings were suffering from an unnatural reaction against his early democratic convictions, he became almost morbidly alarmed at the revolutionary consequences with which, to his mind,

was freighted the growth of popular power, his poetic imagination and sensibilities, which in his young manhood had colored too highly his political hopes, now darkening unduly those which his present Tory convictions had forced upon him. I do not, therefore, apologize for quoting from his feeling-full letters two or three more passages. To Professor Hamilton, of Dublin, one of his most esteemed correspondents, he writes, in 1832: "Your former letter reached me in due time; your second, from Cambridge, two or three days ago. I ought to have written to you long since, but really I have for some time, from private and public causes of sorrow and apprehension, been in a great measure deprived of those genial feelings which, through life, have not been so much accompaniments of my character, as vital principles of my existence. . . . .

"It gives me much pleasure that you and Coleridge have met, and that you were not disappointed in the conversation of a man from whose writings you had previously drawn so much delight and instruction. He and my beloved sister are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted."

Mrs. Hemans was much esteemed by Wordsworth, and duly valued as a poetess. To her

he writes in November, 1832, a long letter, from which I take the following passage: "Europe is at present a melancholy spectacle, and these two islands are likely to reap the fruit of their own folly and madness, in becoming, for the present generation, the two most unquiet and miserable spots upon the earth. May you, my dear friend, find the advantage of the poetic spirit in raising you, in thought at least, above the contentious clouds! Never before did I feel such reason to be grateful for what little inspiration Heaven has graciously bestowed upon my humble intellect. What you kindly wrote upon the interest you took, during your travels, in my verses, could not but be grateful to me, because your own show that in a rare degree you understand and sympathize with me. We are all well, God be thanked. I am a wretched correspondent, as this scrawl abundantly shows."

Whoever wishes to know to the full what Wordsworth thought and felt about the state of England in those years should read "The Warning," a poem written in 1833, of about one hundred of his most polished lines, — lines more weighted with thought than winged with aspiration, and in which the healthy spring of the free poetic mood has been cumbered with

the burden of the too anxious Englishman, the spiritual splendors of his mind overcast by shadows from the temporalities on which the understanding feeds. Wordsworth found (as every man must find) support and security in political institutions, but in his latter years he leant upon them too heavily; nor did he sufficiently recognize that, being made by man, they now and then need repairing and renewing.

Others of his poems of that period are saddened by political solicitude; but there is a class called "Evening Voluntaries," written when the excitement of his mind was subsiding, which are marked by more serenity and faith. A passage from one of these, written in 1834, has a twofold interest, as exhibiting a more happy state of feeling, and as having been directed against Lord Byron and his school. In recollections of these poems, communicated in his latter years to his nephew, Wordsworth himself says: "The lines following 'Nor do words,' etc., were written with Lord Byron's character as a poet before me, and that of others his contemporaries, who wrote under like influences." The interest imparted to these lines by the profound truth embodied in them is heightened by their singularity, for I do not know that in all his poetry is there another

disparaging allusion to contemporary poets. The following is the passage:—

"Not in the lucid intervals of life
That come but as a curse to party-strife;
Not in some hour when Pleasure with a sigh
Of languor puts his rosy garland by;
Not in the breathing-times of that poor slave
Who daily piles up wealth in Mammon's cave—
Is Nature felt, or can be; nor do words,
Which practiced talent readily affords,
Prove that her hand has touched responsive chords;
Nor has her gentle beauty power to move
With genuine rapture and with fervent love
The soul of Genius, if he dare to take
Life's rule from passion craved for passion's sake;
Untaught that *meekness is the cherished bent*
Of all the truly great and all the innocent."

In 1833, there being a Scientific Meeting at Cambridge, to which his friend Hamilton, of Dublin, intended to go, Wordsworth writes to him: "Could not you take us in your way, coming or going to Cambridge? If Mrs. H. accompanies you, we should be glad to see her also.

"I hope that in the meeting about to take place in Cambridge there will be less of mutual flattery among the men of science than appeared in that of the last year at Oxford. Men of science in England seem, indeed, to copy their fellows in France, by stepping too much out of their way for titles and baubles of

that kind, and for offices of state and political struggles, which they would do better to keep out of."

Charles Lamb and Wordsworth were, as is well known, on terms of intimate friendship, appreciating, admiring each the other. The following letter to Lamb (1833) beats with the warm pulse of Wordsworth's domestic heart:

"My dear Lamb, — I have to thank you and Moxon for a delightful volume, your last (I hope not), of 'Elia.' I have read it all except some of the 'Popular Fallacies,' which I reserve. . . . . The book has much pleased the whole of my family, namely, my wife, daughter, Miss Hutchinson, and my poor, dear sister, on her sick-bed; they all return their best thanks. I am not sure but I like the 'Old China,' and the 'Wedding,' as well as any of the Essays. I read 'Love me and my Dog' to my poor sister this morning. . . . .

"I have been thus particular, knowing how much you and your dear sister value this excellent person, whose tenderness of heart I do not honestly believe was ever exceeded by any of God's creatures. Her loving kindness has no bounds. God bless her forever and ever! Again thanking you for your excellent book,

and wishing to know how you and your dear sister are, with best love to you both from us all, I remain, my dear Lamb,

"Your faithful friend,

"W. WORDSWORTH."

He valued the simple habits of his native sequestered Cumberland; but that the absence of active populous towns, as centres of culture, kept at a low rustic level the standard of education and intellectual curiosity, evidence is afforded by this passage in a letter (1833) to Moxon. The sarcasm conveyed in the latter of the two words he emphasizes is pardonable for the truth it carries: "There does not appear to be much genuine relish for poetical publications in Cumberland, if I may judge from the fact of not a copy of my poems having been sold there by one of the leading booksellers, though Cumberland is my native county. Byron and Scott are, I am persuaded, the only *popular* writers in that line, — perhaps the word ought rather to be that they are *fashionable* writers."

About this time Wordsworth had a lively correspondence with the Reverend Alexander Dyce about the book of sonnets which Mr. Dyce was preparing, in the preface of which

he pays a deserved tribute to Wordsworth, to whom the little collection is dedicated. Dyce had published a volume of "Specimens of British Poetesses," in which Wordsworth took so much interest that in one of his letters he offers his assistance. His familiarity with all English poetry enabled him to make a statement which will probably be new to most of my readers, namely, that "the two best ballads, perhaps, of modern times, 'Auld Robin Gray' and the 'Lament for the Defeat of the Scots at Flodden Field,' are both from the pens of females."

In 1834, Wordsworth, in his sixty-fifth year, was still active in body and mind. This he owed, in large measure, to frugality and his open-air life. Something was due to the freedom of his intellectual work. He was never forced to write: his moods were his only masters; to obey these was a joy; and work thus done is a fosterer of health. Thus he was enabled to compass a full earthly circle, to fulfill his high self-imposed obligations, to reap from the rich fields of his mind a complete harvest, to lie, in his eighty-first year, on his deathbed, with the blissful consciousness that his lofty task was finished, that all that he by nature was empowered to do was done. In this

he enjoyed, among renowned contemporaries, almost a solitary privilege. What Coleridge accomplished in his sixty-three years, though full of power and streaked with splendor, was, owing to infirmities bodily and mental, so fragmentary that while he left us seven or eight volumes teeming with precious ore, his earthly being might be called a magnificent torso. Byron lived only thirty-six years, but so fiery was his temperament that in those thirty-six he consumed more nervous vitality than Wordsworth in double the number. Shelley died at thirty, Keats at twenty-five, both wafted early to the upper realms, as though their organisms were too finely charged with magnetism for earth's atmosphere.

1834 was a grievous year to Wordsworth. In it he lost Coleridge and Lamb, besides other early friends. But his poetry, that waited so long to get appreciated, brought to his latter years many younger friends to make up for eminent contemporaries departed, and to console him (if he needed consolation), by their admiration, for early neglect.

Among the Epitaphs a long one is devoted to Lamb, to whom he pays a heartfelt tribute, in which is this line :—

"Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived!"

In stanzas written on the death of Hogg, he again mentions Lamb along with Coleridge: —

"Nor has the rolling year twice measured,
From sign to sign, its steadfast course,
Since every mortal power of Coleridge
Was frozen at its marvelous source;

"The rapt one of the godlike forehead,
The heaven-eyed creature, sleeps in earth:
And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,
Has vanished from his lonely hearth."

To Robert Montgomery, who had sent him two volumes of poetry, he wrote a letter, a passage of which could have come from no one but a poet-sage, so saturated is it with wisdom. Such masterly advice cries for reiterated publication for the benefit of the craft, — with this proviso, that he who is to profit fully by the advice should be an "author of sense and genius:" —

"I cannot conclude without one word of literary advice, which I hope you will deem my advanced age entitles me to give. Do not, my dear sir, be anxious about any individual's opinion concerning your writings, however highly you may think of his genius or rate his judgment. Be a severe critic to yourself; and depend upon it, no person's decision upon the merit of your works will bear comparison in point of value with your own. You must be

conscious from what feeling they have flowed, and how far they may or may not be allowed to claim, on that account, permanent respect; and above all, I would remind you, with a view to tranquillize and steady your mind, that no man takes the trouble of surveying and pondering another's writings with a hundredth part of the care which an author of sense and genius will have bestowed upon his own. Add to this reflection another, which I press upon you, as it has supported me through life, namely, that Posterity will settle all accounts justly, and that works which deserve to last will last; and if undeserving this fate, the sooner they perish the better."

With his many excursions on the Continent, Wordsworth, in 1837, had not yet seen Rome. Once he penetrated down the southern slopes of the Alps to Milan, but hitherto economical prudence had deterred him from gratifying a wish to behold Rome and other celebrated Italian cities. Having secured one of the most experienced and travel-taught of companions, his friend Henry Crabb Robinson, he set out in March, 1837, from London, to which they returned in August, "earlier," says Wordsworth, "than my companion wished or I should myself have desired had I been a bachelor." The

poetic fruit of this tour took mostly the form of sonnets. Among several addressed to Rome, two or three are prophetic, one ending thus:

> "Fallen Power,
> Thy fortunes, twice exalted, might provoke
> Verse to glad notes prophetic of the hour
> When thou, uprisen, shalt break thy double yoke,
> And enter, with prompt aid from the most High,
> On the third stage of thy great destiny."

Another sonnet, written before leaving Italy, ends, —

> "Awake!
> Mother of heroes, from thy death-like sleep!"

These sonnets are not among his best. To his companion he repeatedly said, "It is too late." Once he said, "I have matter for volumes, had I but youth to work it up." Robinson relates a charming incident, which shows how much stronger than in Art or History was Wordsworth's interest in living human nature. While they were in the famous Roman Amphitheatre at Nismes, Robinson noticed that Wordsworth's eyes were intently fixed in a direction where there was least to see. Looking that way he saw two young children at play with flowers, and overheard Wordsworth say to himself: "Oh, you darlings, I wish I could put you in my pocket and carry you to Rydal Mount."

XVI.

THE CRITIC.

THE poet is necessarily a critic. The writing of genuine poetry implies the sensibility which is a primary requisite for critical insight. A great poet-thinker will be a great critic, but a great critic is not necessarily a great poet. Sainte-Beuve is a great critic, so is Carlyle; neither of them is a great poet; but the natures of both are enriched and beautified by sensibility. Of recent great poets, Goethe and Coleridge seem to me to be the best in criticism. Their mental endowments were remarkably full, with few chasms, their temperaments sensitive, and they both cultivated the art of criticism. This Wordsworth did not do, and, moreover, he had not their completeness of natural equipment. Nevertheless, he was a great critic, and some of his judgments, weighty with intrinsic excellence, are made the more imposing by the poetic grasp and the upright personality of the man.

In the two chapters, near the close of the

"Memoirs," entitled "Reminiscences," are recorded some of his critical opinions as given in conversations reported by admiring listeners. His intimacy for so many years with Coleridge gives additional value to the following judgment upon him and his poetical powers, delivered at a tea-party in 1844. The description of the celebrated conversation of Coleridge is the best I ever read: "He said that the liveliest and truest image he could give of Coleridge's talk was 'that of a majestic river, the sound or sight of whose course you caught at intervals, which was sometimes concealed by forests, sometimes lost in sand, then came flashing out broad and distinct, then again took a turn which your eye could not follow, yet you knew and felt that it was the same river: so,' he said, 'there was always a train, a stream, in Coleridge's discourse; always a connection between its parts in his own mind, though one not always perceptible to the minds of others.' Mr. Wordsworth went on to say that in his opinion Coleridge had been spoilt as a poet by going to Germany. The bent of his mind, which was at all times very much to metaphysical theology, had there been fixed in that direction. 'If it had not been so,' said Wordsworth, 'he would have been the greatest, the most abiding poet of his age.'"

On the same occasion, the discourse having turned to Scotland, he spoke thus frankly of Scott: "I don't like," he said, "to say all this, or to take to pieces some of the best reputed passages of Scott's verse, especially in presence of my wife, because she thinks me too fastidious; but as a poet Scott *cannot* live, for he has never in verse written anything addressed to the immortal part of man. In making amusing stories in verse he will be superseded by some newer versifier; what he writes in the way of natural description is merely rhyming nonsense."

One evening (1846) at his own house, speaking of emulation as a help to school-progress, he expressed this decided opinion against it: "I felt very early the force of the words, 'Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect,' and as a teacher, or friend, or counselor of youth, I would hold forth no other motive to exertion than this. There is, I think, none other held forth in the gospels. No permission is given to emulation there."

Upon the summing up by Milton of his conception of Eve in this line, —

"He for God only, she for God in him,"

Wordsworth made this protesting comment:

"Now, that is a low, a very low, and a very false estimate of woman's condition."

Wordsworth had made himself well acquainted with the body and soul of the whole English poetry; but he of course studied only its best pages, those with most soul gleaming through the body. He several times speaks of Spenser with a degree of admiration I should not have expected from him. From a similar point of view he somewhat overrated, it seems to me, Ariosto and Tasso (who belong to the same order of poets as Spenser), who, he says, are unduly depreciated in comparison with Dante. Compared with the earnest, deep-souled, gigantic creator of the "Inferno," Tasso and Ariosto are perfumed triflers. But Wordsworth delighted in fine workmanship, and for this, besides his other merits, Spenser deserved his love. In a long passage of exceeding interest about his contemporaries, which will be given presently, he says of Shelley: "Shelley is one of the best artists of us all; I mean in workmanship of style." Here is a passage in which he tells who were his models at the time when he chose poetry as his life-work. Before that he had, as we have seen, studied Pope. He soon rose above Pope. "I was impressed with a conviction that there

were four English poets whom I must have continually before me as examples, — Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton. These I must study, and equal *if I could;* and I need not think of the rest."

Where is the direct evidence that Shakespeare thought lowly of himself? Is it in the fifty-fifth sonnet? which opens, —

"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time;"

or in the eighty-first? which ends, —

"Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;
And tongues to be your being shall rehearse,
When all the breathers of this world are dead;
You still shall live — such virtue hath my pen —
Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men."

One rejoices to read these two powerful sonnets every now and then through one's whole life, to renew the assurance that their author, our incomputable benefactor, knew what he was, — how great he was. He was the only man of his day who did thoroughly know what William Shakespeare was. It is difficult to think that a mind so supreme was not fully conscious of its own means and reach. Or is the opin-

ion in the subjoined item of Wordsworth's table-talk held by him because he regarded as indirect evidence of Shakespeare's low estimate of himself that he did not collect and himself edit his mighty works? Shakespeare died comparatively young, and suddenly. Who can infer what he would have done or not have done, had he lived ten years longer? C. Armitage Brown, one of the shrewdest among his commentators, gives good reasons for believing that he was about to edit his works when he died.

"I cannot account for Shakespeare's low estimate of his own writings, except from the sublimity, the superhumanity, of his genius. They were infinitely below his conception of what they might have been, and ought to have been."

With what close attention Wordsworth studied the tragedies of Shakespeare the following passage proves: "'Macbeth' is the best conducted of Shakespeare's plays. The fault of 'Julius Cæsar,' 'Hamlet,' and 'Lear' is that the interest is not, and by the nature of the case could not be, sustained to their conclusion. The death of Julius Cæsar is too *overwhelming* an incident for *any* stage of the drama but the *last*. It is an incident to which the mind clings and from which it will not be torn away

to share in other sorrows. The same may be said of the madness of Lear. Again, the opening of 'Hamlet' is full of exhausting interest. There is more mind in 'Hamlet' than any other play; more knowledge of human nature. The first act is incomparable. . . . . There is too much of an every-day sick room in the deathbed scene of Catherine, in 'Henry the Eighth' — too much of leeches and apothecaries' vials." . . . .

In the summer of 1827, speaking of some of his contemporaries, Wordsworth said: "T. Moore has great natural genius; but he is too lavish of brilliant ornament. His poems smell of the perfumer's and milliner's shops. He is not content with a ring and a bracelet, but he must have rings in the ears, rings on the nose, — rings everywhere.

"Walter Scott is not a careful composer. He allows himself many liberties, which betray a want of respect for his reader. For instance, he is too fond of inversions; that is, he often places the verb before the substantive, and the accusative before the verb. W. Scott quoted, as from me, —

'The swan on *sweet* St. Mary's lake
Floats double, swan and shadow,'

instead of *still;* thus obscuring my idea, and

betraying his own uncritical principles of composition.

"Byron seems to me deficient in *feeling*. Professor Wilson, I think, used to say that 'Beppo' was his best poem; because all his faults were there brought to a height. I never read the 'English Bards' through. His critical prognostications have, for the most part, proved erroneous."

Wordsworth relates this amusing incident: "One day I met Mr. M. T. Sadler at the late Archbishop's. Sadler did not know me; and before dinner he began to launch forth in a critical dissertation on contemporary English Poetry. 'Among living poets, your Grace may know there is one called Wordsworth, whose writings the world calls childish and puerile, but I think some of them wonderfully pathetic.' 'Now, Mr. Sadler,' said the Archbishop, 'what a scrape you are in! here is Mr. Wordsworth: but go down with him to dinner and you will find that, though a great poet, he does not belong to the *genus irritabile*.'"

Here is a valuable comment on the Ode. The visionariness and imaginativeness of this masterpiece must not be mistaken for belief in *metempsychosis*: "In my Ode on the 'Intimations of Immortality in Childhood,' I do

not profess to give a literal representation of the state of the affections and of the moral being in childhood. I record my feelings at that time, — my absolute spirituality, my 'all-soulness,' if I may so speak. At that time I could not believe that I should lie down quietly in the grave, and that my body would moulder into dust."

Is any admirer of Wordsworth strong enough, abstract enough, in imagination to figure to himself the author of "The Excursion" as a field-marshal, at the head of embattled legions? From the subjoined passage it will be learnt that, amid the doubts and anxieties with which Wordsworth was beset as to the choice of a profession after he had left Cambridge, he had some thought of entering the army. In another conversation he remarked, good-humoredly, that "Nature had qualified him for success in three callings, those of poet, of landscape-gardener, and of critic of pictures and works of art." "After tea, in speaking of the misfortune it was when a young man did not seem more inclined to one profession than another, Wordsworth said that he had always some feeling of indulgence for men at that age, who felt such a difficulty. He had himself passed through it, and had incurred the strict-

ures of his friends and relations on this subject. He said that after he had finished his college course he was in great doubt as to what his future employment should be. He did not feel himself good enough for the Church; he felt that his mind was not properly disciplined for that holy office, and that the struggle between his conscience and his impulses would have made life a torture. He also shrank from the law, although Southey often told him that he was well fitted for the higher parts of the profession. He had studied military history with great interest, and the strategy of war; and he always fancied that he had talents for command; and he had at one time thought of a military life; but then he was without connections, and he felt if he were ordered to the West Indies, his talents would not save him from the yellow fever, and he gave that up. At this time he had only a hundred a year. Upon this he lived, and traveled, and married, for it was not until the late Lord Lonsdale came into possession that the money which was due to them was restored. He mentioned this to show how difficult it often was to judge of what was passing in a young man's mind; but he thought that for the generality of men it was much better that they

should be early led to the exercise of a profession of their own choice."

This chapter cannot be more fitly concluded than with a portion of Mrs. Hemans' reminiscence of a visit to Rydal in 1830. . . . . "Mr. Wordsworth's kindness has inspired me with a feeling of confidence, which it is delightful to associate with those of admiration and respect, before excited by his writings, — and he has treated me with so much consideration, and gentleness, and care! — they have been like balm to my spirit. . . . . I wish I had time to tell you of mornings which he has passed in reading to me, and of evenings when he has walked beside me, whilst I rode through the lovely vales of Grasmere and Rydal; and of his beautiful, sometimes half-unconscious recitation, in a voice so deep and solemn that it has often brought tears into my eyes. His voice has something quite breeze-like in the soft gradations of its swells and falls. . . . . We had been listening, during one of these evening rides, to various sounds and notes of birds which broke upon the stillness; and at last I said, 'Perhaps there may be still deeper and richer music pervading all nature than we are permitted, in this state, to hear.' He answered by reciting those glorious lines of Milton's: —

'Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep,' etc.;

and this in tones that seemed rising from such depths of veneration! His tones of solemn earnestness, sinking, almost dying away into a murmur of veneration, as if the passage were breathed forth from the heart, I shall never forget."

XVII.

THE EXCURSION.

Now came the triumph. Forty years before, Wordsworth had been decried, derided, by the influential critics of the day, as tame, prosaic, puerile; and derided so effectually that the sale of his poems was almost arrested for many years. But these were critics of *the day*, and he whom they denounced was a poet for *all time*. So, by degrees, the more thoughtful minds — educated into better judgment by the derided poems themselves — counteracted the shallow opinions circulated by envy and malice and ignorance, and won, during the poet's life, so firm a place for him in the heart of the new generation that in his seventieth year an ovation was given him at Oxford, so impressive, so sonorous, that it resounded through the world, — a glorifying proclamation and a prophecy.

When, as the recipient of an honorary degree, the name of Wordsworth was announced in the Sheldonian Theatre, crowded to excess, there resounded thunders of enthusiastic ap-

plause, repeated over and over again, soul-sprung shouts, such as had not been heard since the visit of the Duke of Wellington. Of his friends and admirers many went up to Oxford on purpose to be present. One of these, Mr. Peace, librarian of the city library, Bristol, walked from Bristol to Oxford, a distance of seventy miles. Dr. Arnold (the distinguished, honored Dr. Arnold of Rugby) was there, who had not been to Oxford for twenty years, and others of note; but they whose eyes would have most filled with tears of delightful emotion, Coleridge and Lamb and others of his earliest appreciators, were not present in the body.

Yes, on that day of July, 1839, the great, venerable poet had the deep joy of feeling that by his countrymen he was accepted for what he was, and honored among the highest. And let due honor be paid to those who, in the beginning of his career, had the discernment to discover his superiority, and the independence and generosity to utter their judgment. Conspicuous among this clear-sighted few was Southey, who, a quarter of a century before the Oxford proclamation, wrote to Bernard Barton these warm, emphatic words: "Wordsworth's residence and mine are fifteen miles asunder; a sufficient distance to preclude any frequent in-

terchange of visits. I have known him nearly twenty years, and for about half that time intimately. The strength and the character of his mind you see in 'The Excursion;' and his *Life does not belie his Writings;* for, in *every relation of life*, and *every point of view*, he is a truly exemplary and admirable man. In conversation he is powerful beyond any of his contemporaries; and as a poet — I speak not from the partiality of friendship, nor because we have been so absurdly held up as both writing upon one concerted system of poetry, but with the most deliberate exercise of impartial judgment whereof I am capable, when I declare my full conviction that Posterity will rank him with Milton."

Other tokens of the esteem in which he was held came to him from those in high places, who in this instance represented the enlightened opinion of the realm. For many years Wordsworth had enjoyed the income (over £500) from the post of Stamp Distributor. This, in 1842, he resigned, but had the influence to get appointed in his stead his son William, who for some years had been his deputy. In announcing to him this arrangement, the then Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, adds this sentence, so honorable to himself: "It is some

compensation for the severe toil and anxiety of public life to have, occasionally, the opportunity of serving or gratifying those who are an honor to their country."

A few weeks later, in a note written in the same spirit of appreciation of what was due the illustrious poet, Sir Robert informs him that the Queen has settled on him for life "an annual provision of three hundred pounds."

And still another honor awaited him. The following year Southey, the laureate, died. Ten days after his decease the laureateship was offered to Wordsworth, through a note from the Lord Chamberlain, Earl De la Warr. This Wordsworth declined, on account of duties imposed by the office which his advanced age would not allow him to perform. Hereupon came another note from the Lord Chamberlain, pressing his acceptance of the appointment, backed by one from Sir Robert Peel, who begs him "not to be deterred by the fear of any obligations which the appointment may be supposed to imply. I will undertake that you shall have nothing *required* of you." And so Wordsworth became poet-laureate when just about to enter his seventy-fourth year.

In one of his searching critical papers *on translating Homer*, Mr. Matthew Arnold says:

"He [Homer] is, indeed, rather to be classed with Milton than the balladists and Scott; for what he has in common with Milton — the noble and profound application of ideas to life — is the most essential part of poetic greatness. The most essentially grand and characteristic things of Homer are such things as 'And I have endured — the like of which no soul upon the earth hath yet endured — to carry to my lips the hand of him who slew my child;'

"Or as 'Nay, and thou, too, old man, in times past wert, as we hear, happy;'

"Or as 'For, so have the gods spun our destiny to us wretched mortals, that we should live in sorrow; but they themselves are without trouble.'"

Tried by this exacting test, Wordsworth stands abreast with the very foremost poets of all nations and ages.

At the same time, in order that the application of ideas be the more productive, the ideas must be embodied in a narrative and characters that shall give the poem what may be called superficial attractiveness. Thus, the Iliad is more attractive than "Paradise Lost," finding, therefore, many more readers, and thence the ideas applied to life by Homer are brought

more frequently before the minds of cultivated humanity than those of Milton. The story of the Iliad is more apprehensible than that of "Paradise Lost:" the one is concrete and manifest, the other comparatively abstract, recondite. Homer is superior to Milton in the primary artistic gift of imparting life to his personages and the scenes they move in. However grandly and melodiously the Muse may sing —

> "Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world and all our woe,"

the theme is too theological and factitious to bring itself warmly home to the reader's bosom. Nor is there incident enough for twelve books, and thence, as well as from the nature of Milton's mind, which prompted such a theme, there is a lack of progression and variety. About the whole Miltonic narration there is an unreality which fatigues the reader's attention, instead of stimulating it, as every poetic narrative should do.

"The Excursion" makes no pretension to epic form: for that form Wordsworth lacked the constructive gift. He could not project one involved story to be carried forward by the interaction and counteraction of the agents all combined and subordinated to one momen-

tous end, towards which everything tends. His mind was meditative much more than sensuous and plastic; not objective, but subjective. His personages are put before us not so much for their own sakes as for the sake of presenting, through them, certain principles and motives of life and conduct. Ideas precede the personages instead of springing, unconsciously as it were, out of them. The figures are for the most part absent, and are presented to us through the mouths of others instead of by their own audible speech and visible motion. Thence they are not carried directly into our hearts, but indirectly. And this is the advantage of the dramatic form, which demands not only creative, but histrionic power in the poet. Thence good drama is seldom achieved, and thence Wordsworth's signal dramatic failure.

But "The Excursion" is not a failure; it is the opposite of a failure; it is a glorious, enduring success, as embodying in the harmonious iambics of a poet who especially valued the *art* of poetry the thoughts, sentiments, convictions of a man of rare mental endowments, a clear, strong understanding being combined with noble aspirations and perpetual sympathies, all mellowed by wide experience and culture. If there is not the vivacity of

presentation of Homer, neither is there his repetition; if there is not his rapidity of movement, there are depths of meditation and sweeps of thought and problems of life beyond the reach of the dear, sensuous, gigantic, luminous, young[1] pagan. And thence, for the manifestation of "the most essential part of poetic greatness," for "grand and characteristic things," such as Mr. Arnold quotes from Homer, for every one of such to be found in the Iliad, half a score could be cited from "The Excursion."

That far-reaching answer to the question, "What are things eternal?" near the beginning of the fourth book — a passage so grandly thoughtful, so majestic and melodious, that it were a tribute to Milton to call it Miltonic — is nourished by an atmosphere of spirituality to the upper stratum of which no Greek ever rose, — saving, perhaps, in their highest moods, Socrates or Plato. Take a single fragment of an appeal to the "Prime self-existing Cause." This beautiful sentence basks, too, in an Homeric sunshine: —

> "Thou, who didst wrap the cloud
> Of infancy around us, that thyself,

[1] Young, because he lived in the youth of Greece and civilization.

Therein, with our simplicity a while
Might'st hold, on earth, communion undisturbed."

What a passage this is to quote, on apt occasion, instead of hackneyed Horatian or Virgilian lines. And here, two pages farther, is another "application of ideas to life:" —

"'T is by comparison an easy task
Earth to despise; but to converse with heaven, —
This is not easy."

Spirituality, a characteristic of Wordsworth as poet, is the very essence of "The Excursion," underlying its reflections and meditations, overhanging its scenes. In the second of the two following lines, belief in the transcendent, paramount vitality of the spirit is expressed with a boldness which endues Wordsworth with the Prophet's majesty: —

"Rejoicing secretly
In the sublime attractions of the grave."

What significance in the two following lines! Could we obey their injunction, all the threads of our tangled life would be disengaged and straightened, and we should advance nearer to perfection: —

"Take courage, and withdraw yourself from ways
That run not parallel to nature's course."

Who but a profound poet, after his faculties

had been steeped in experience and spiritual meditation, could utter such wise, cheerful words as these? —

"We live by Admiration, Hope, and Love;
And, even as these are well and wisely fixed,
In dignity of being we ascend."

A description of the effect upon one's whole being of the sweetening power of love he concludes with these lines, which hold forth an ideal which it were healthful for us all to aspire to: —

"And seeks for good; and finds the good he seeks:
Until abhorrence and contempt are things
He only knows by name; and, if he hear
From other mouths the language which they speak,
He is compassionate; and has no thought,
No feeling, which can overcome his love."

Some votaries of science think they can see "all creation" through the telescope and microscope, and that physical laws embrace and control the whole of being. At such these lines are aimed: —

"Science then
Shall be a precious visitant; and then,
And only then, be worthy of her name;
For then her heart shall kindle; her dull eye,
Dull and inanimate, no more shall hang
Chained to its object in brute slavery."

He thus describes a rural pastor: —

"The calm delights
Of unambitious piety he chose,
And learning's solid dignity."

Many similar gems of wisdom glisten in the glow of poetic beauty, gems set in paragraphs and pages of fresh, instructive exposition of human doing and suffering, or of vivid landscape reflected from the mirror of a great Artist's eye. Poetic genius lights up what it falls on. The church-yard among the mountains, in "The Excursion," instead of being a blank, silent, melancholy inclosure of buried bodies, becomes alive with souls. It is far other than the superficial animation given to it by the risen sun, drawing its earthly features into bright visibility: it is not a bit of landscape suddenly illuminated; it is a resurrection of the buried, effected by the poet's magic. The buried rise out of their graves, and speak through the tongue of the poet. His fellow-men come back to earthly life at his bidding, because he is so much a man, so palpitating with the desires and passions and aspirations of men, such a focus of those rays which, from the brain of man, play upon things, all these gifts of sensibility and intellect being in him tuned, harmonized, exalted by the supreme poetic gift, which interfuses them all with the vivifying light of the beautiful.

This vivifying light it is which makes "The Excursion" a volume wherein, amid so much else, may be studied felicities of speech. The language of Wordsworth, as the pliable instrument of a poet who is a close, subtle, exacting thinker, a watchful, sympathetic observer, is distinguished by appropriateness; and when we consider the range of his thought, the wealth of his sensibilities, and hence the immense multiplication of his utterance, to say that his language is singularly appropriate is of itself a high and broad eulogy. Felicities of diction spring from soundness of feeling and clearness of perception fused into a brilliant aptness of words by poetic warmth. Wordsworth's language is not the dress of his thoughts, it is their incarnation; it fits them as the pliant skin fits the flesh out of which as well as over which it is woven. His words never overlay his thought, so entirely are they the creatures of his thought. The form is never too brilliant for the substance. There is not that sheen imparted by shining words which makes the matter seem at first richer than it is, and which, wearing off, takes away with it the freshness of the page. The mind of Wordsworth being strong and clear, logical and artistic, could obey the principle of Joubert, — "Keep your

mind above your thoughts, and your thoughts above your expressions." He is in the best sense classical, in that his thoughts being choice and fresh are perfectly matched with words. Hence his style is firm and transparent. If he is less attractive than some of his contemporaries and successors, it is because he is less superficial than they, because he opens to the reader a deeper inner world of poetry. If he occasionally lacks color, that is on account of his spirituality. The flames of some poets are redder and make more crackle, but such do not hold the lasting warmth of Wordsworth's. If he wants the sensuousness of Shakespeare and Homer, he has their power of creative description. Next to Shakespeare, Wordsworth is full of felicities, significant phrases, happy turns of thought, single sentences that carry with them service and joy, such service as only thoughts born of truth can perform, such joy as only truth and beauty in unison can enkindle, — sentences which, shining with the mild glow of a chastened poetic imagination, are embedded forever in the texture of the English language, deepening it, strengthening it, beautifying it.

Throughout Wordsworth's works there is a unity of spirit which has led to his being called

one-sided: it were fitter, on account of his moral intuitions, to call him deep-sided. This unity makes it appropriate to insert here one of his sonnets which enumerates some of the themes he delighted to treat, and which are treated in many pages of "The Excursion:"—

"Not Love, nor War, nor the tumultuous swell
Of civil conflict, nor the wrecks of change,
Nor Duty struggling with affliction strange—
Not these *alone* inspire the tuneful shell;
But where untroubled peace and concord dwell,
There also is the Muse not loath to range,
Watching the twilight smoke of cot or grange,
Skyward ascending from a woody dell.
Meek aspirations please her, lone endeavor,
And sage content, and placid melancholy;
She loves to gaze upon a crystal river—
Diaphanous because it travels slowly;
Soft is the music that would charm forever;
The flower of sweetest smell is shy and lowly."

XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE deepest sorrow of Wordsworth's life fell upon him in old age. Many years before, he had lost children; but, sore as was the affliction to his affectionate fatherly heart, these died young, and when himself was young enough to outgrow his grief. For thirty years Dora was his only daughter, a dutiful, attaching child, the comfort of her parents, married, since 1841, to Mr. Quillinan, an accomplished man of letters. When, after having been for forty-four years entwined round his warmest heart-strings, doubly endeared to him by filial devotion and intellectual sympathy, she was torn away from him, the wrench was fearful. A month after Dora's death, August 9, 1847, he wrote to Moxon: "We bear up under our affliction as well as God enables us to do. But oh! my dear friend, our loss is immeasurable. God bless you and yours." The note announcing Dora's death to his nephew (and biographer) concludes with a touching phrase: "Your af-

fectionate uncle, and the more so for this affliction." In speaking of Dora many months afterwards, he said, "The loss of her has taken the sunshine out of my life."

Wordsworth's work was done. The spring which, fifty years before, from the high interior resource of its granite mountain, had come forth timidly, amid wild flowers, to flow rejoicing and unknown in the sunshine, and as its stream grew in strength had made itself felt by the purity and productivity of its waters, had now run its long, deep, untainted course. Wordsworth had no word more for his fellowmen: he had said his great say. From obscurity and poverty he had risen to competence and renown. The best and wisest of his countrymen acknowledged their obligations to him; men from another land and a distant continent, whose privilege it is to speak the language of Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth, on landing in dear old England, went out of their way that they might behold and listen to the great poet sage to whom their hearts and their intellects owed so much.

Towards the end of March, 1850, Wordsworth fell ill. On Sunday the 7th of April, the day he completed his eightieth year, he was prayed for in Rydal Chapel. He grew daily

worse. On the 20th, it was seen that his earthly end was nigh. His wife, the same age with himself, said to him, "William, you are going to Dora." Sixteen days after he had entered his eighty-first year he did go, at mid-day on the 23d of April, the same day of the same month on which Shakespeare was born and died.

Had the beautiful nature about Rydal been capable of consciousness, its face on that day would have been marred by inward disturbance. The lovely lakes, which had looked their loveliest under his gaze, would have ruffled themselves, as if suffering under the whips of conflicting winds. The mountains and valleys, among which he had been cradled and reared, and had lived one of the most productive lives ever lived on earth, the valleys and mountains, which *he* could no more look upon, would have shrouded themselves in the mourning of their darkest mists. The streams and waterfalls would in sadness have hushed their music which their poet could no longer listen to. And the wild violets, which had been his life-long companions and comforters, would have closed their sweet petals at noon, feeling that night was come, because upon him who had most loved them was come the night of death, and he could see them no more.

For the Poet himself, that was his day of exaltation, of translation to regions more beautiful than those his mortal eyes had feasted on, to visual prospects lighted up by a light even diviner than that of the sun. For him it was a new birthday, a day of reunion with Dora and other long-lost children, of reunion with his father and mother and a crowd of dear friends; the opening day of a grander, more glorious phase of life, which few who had gone before him were better fitted to enjoy. For the community around Rydal it was a day of deep depression. Aged as was William Wordsworth, his departure from among them was an immeasurable deprivation. The chief joy and glory of the neighborhood was gone. The tall, gaunt figure of the venerated poet would never be seen again among them: a big chasm was made in their daily being. But through the gloom of the mourners round his grave shimmered sweet memories, memories of his wise words, his kindly deeds, his venerable aspect, his neighborly amenities, his integrity. Standing beside the body's resting-place, through the minds of his older neighbors passed swiftly the procession of his long manhood in its simplicity and beneficence. To them William Wordsworth was the beloved, respected man;

to the younger, his familiar, ever welcome person was clothed with a grandeur thrown round it by poetic fame.

On the wings of that fame the news was borne through England and America; and many hearts were touched by the sad tidings, for to many he was the great master whose fellow-feeling and pathos had so moved them and rejoiced them and lifted them that they felt they had lost an unseen benefactor, a most dear, revered friend. And through their minds passed swiftly the glories of his song, as pure, every one of them, as the forest-thoughts of Diana, as fresh as the ever-young Apollo's beautiful presence. To one came echoing out of the past upon his ear some sonorous sonnet, to another a tender ballad, to a third a longer narrative, to some the profound meditations of "The Excursion;" but all were in accord to hail as his masterpiece the great Ode. With this, then, I crown the end of a little volume which has been written under the impulses of Love and Admiration, and with the Hope that it may do something towards making Wordsworth more deeply valued in America.

ODE.

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.

The Child is Father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.
See page 129.

I.

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparel'd in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it has been of yore; —
Turn whereso'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II.

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose;
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

III.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,

To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong;
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng;
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

IV.

Ye blessèd Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel — I feel it all.
O evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the Sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his mother's arm:
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!—
But there 's a Tree, of many, one,

A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

V.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the East
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

VI.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim

The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII.

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learnèd art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

VIII.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity;

Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st th' eternal deep,
Haunted forever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring th' inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX.

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest.—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;

But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things;
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realized;
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X.

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,

Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI.

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripp'd lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet;
The Clouds that gather round the setting Sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality:
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears. [1803-6.